South Haven Tribune

$3

August 17, 2025

SH schools to install new fiber optics

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven school board has approved the next steps to replace the district's fiber optic network.

The fiber optic network connects all the schools in the district with access to internet and resources for the staff and students.

Director of Non-Instructional Services Kevin Dee told the board that the current network is getting old, during a meeting Wednesday.

"We're nearing the end of the expected life of it," Dee said. "It'll be faster internet. You know the technology has improved in the 25, 30 years or so."

The school was able to get 95 percent of the project funded through a grant.

Part of the construction required for this project will include disturbing parkways throughout the city. The Michigan Department of Transportation requires certain liability forms to be filled out before that part of the project can begin.

The board approved the required documents during Wednesday's meeting.

TurnKey Network Solutions is overseeing the project and Dee said they are currently working on the engineering and getting permits approved.

Dee said the project is expected to be installed and up and running sometime this fall.

Other items

The board approved the hiring of seven new teachers including:

- Shelby Kragt as a kindergarten teacher at Maple Grove Elementary School.
- Jacob Dubina as a special education teacher at Maple Grove Elementary School.
- Michelle Westcott as a math teacher at Baseline Middle School.
- Danielle Yanik as a fourth-grade teacher at North Shore Elementary School.
- Katelyn Kretz as a special education teacher at Baseline Middle School.
- Makenna Fall as a first-grade teacher at Maple Grove Elementary School.
- Daniel Palazzolo as a social studies teacher at Baseline Middle School.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

NATIONAL BLUEBERRY FESTIVAL

Photos by Julie Newell / Tribune Editor

Little Miss Blueberry and her court kicked off the blueberry pie eating contest on Aug. 9 during the National Blueberry Festival.

The South Haven school marching band helped lead the way during the National Blueberry Festival on Aug. 9.

Various pageant courts, including the Blossomtime Royalty, joined South Haven in celebrating the National Blueberry Festival.

People of all ages and even dogs had the chance to participate in the National Blueberry Festival parade on Aug. 9.

The Casco Community Band played through the heat on Aug. 9 during National Blueberry Festival parade.

South Haven Township eyes fire millage hearing

By JULIE NEWELL
SH Tribune Editor

SOUTH HAVEN — The South Haven Township board has set a public hearing for a new fire millage.

The hearing will take place during the board's regular meeting, which is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Sept. 10.

The proposed millage rate is set for 3.63 mills, for an undisclosed amount of years.

Township Supervisor Ross Stein said during the meeting they only need 2.63 mills for the South Haven Area Emergency Services, but added another mill to cover the cost of fire hydrants in the township.

Three words

Interim Police Chief Adam DeBoer gave an update to the board with information about a new tool that dispatch is using.

During Wednesday's meeting, he told the board about an app the Van Buren County Central Dispatch is using to help locate people who are in danger.

The app is called What Three Words, which allows dispatch and police to locate a person within 10 feet of where they are.

The company who created the app mapped out 57 trillion, 10-foot squares and each square has three words assigned to it.

"So, if you call 911 and you have this app and you don't know where you are, rather than trying to get on a map and look up a phone or the latitude and longitude, you can go to the app, click your square and you can tell Van Buren dispatchm 'I'm at this square and it has words,'" DeBoer said.

He said the map extends

See **TOWNSHIP**, page A2

How to get kids back on a sleep schedule for the school year

By ADITHI RAMAKRISHNAN
AP Science Writer

NEW YORK — After a summer of vacations and late nights, it's time to set those back-to-school alarms.

A good night's sleep helps students stay focused and attentive in class. Experts say it's worth easing kids back into a routine with the start of a new school year.

"We don't say ' get good sleep ' just because," said pediatrician Dr. Gabrina Dixon with Children's National Hospital. "It really helps kids learn and it helps them function throughout the day."

The amount of sleep kids need changes as they age. Preschoolers should get up to 13 hours of sleep. Tweens need between nine and 12 hours. Teenagers do best with eight to 10 hours of shut-eye.

Set an earlier bedtime

Early bedtimes can slip through the cracks over the summer as kids stay up for sleepovers, movie marathons and long plane flights. To get back on track, experts recommend setting earlier bedtimes a week or two before the first day of school or gradually going to bed 15 to 30 minutes earlier each night.

Don't eat a heavy meal before bed and avoid TV or screen time two hours before sleep. Instead, work in relaxing activities to slow down like showering and reading a story.

"You're trying to take the cognitive load off your mind," said Dr. Nitun Verma, a spokesperson for the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. "It would be like if you're driving,

See **SLEEP**, page A2

The Tribune: Celebrating Our 126th Year

6 94653 00027 4

Support the Local Businesses Who Help Support Our Community!

OBITUARIES

Sue McKamey

Sept. 24, 1941 – Aug. 7, 2025

Sue Ann (New) McKamey, 83, of South Haven, Mich. passed away peacefully on Aug. 7, 2025.

She was born Sept. 24, 1941, in Hilltop, Ky. – a Stearns Coal Company mining camp – to Wilburn and Doris (Barnett) New.

When she was a young child, her family moved to Benton Harbor, Mich., and later to South Haven, where they owned and operated the "Carol Ann" restaurant. Sue Ann attended South Haven High School (Class of 1959) and built a life rooted in hard work, family and faith.

On May 11, 1960, Sue married the love of her life, Herbert Dale McKamey, and together they raised three sons: Kevin (Julie) McKamey of Tyaskin, MD; Kelly (Stephanie) McKamey of Granger, Ind.; and Kyle (Sarah) McKamey of South Haven.

Sue Ann's career reflected her tireless work ethic and dedication. Over the years, she worked for Quality Auto Repair, Midtown Motors, Controlled Rubber, Everett Piano, Bohn Aluminum, the South Haven Public Schools Food Preparation Center and Hart-Cooley in Holland, Mich., from which she retired.

She was a member of First Baptist Church in South Haven, where her faith was an important part of her life.

At home, Sue Ann loved to feed the deer, birds and squirrels that visited her yard, finding joy in watching them feast. Her voicemail greeting even reflected her warmth and humor, starting with a playful "roses are red, violets are blue" poem.

Sue Ann is survived by her children and grandchildren: Mitchell McKamey (Kaylee), Amber McKamey (James Westfall), Brenden McKamey (Brooke), Kameren McKamey (Hailey), Lennon McKamey, and Torey Noora (Chris). Great-grandchildren include Emery Noora, Zara Noora, Brody McKamey, and Briar McKamey.

She was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Herbert, her sister Vivian Bierhalter and her grandson, Keenan Lee McKamey.

Sue Ann will be remembered for her strong spirit, her sense of humor and the love she had for her family.

Cremation has taken place and a private family service will be held at a later date.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence, go to www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

Sara Nisbet

May 27, 1932 – Aug. 8, 2025

Sara Frances (Worthington) Nisbet, a beacon of unconditional love and light, went to be with her Lord on Friday, Aug. 8, 2025 surrounded by loved ones in South Haven, Mich. at the age of 93.

Born in Parksville, Ky. to Edward and Elizabeth "Bettie" Shannon Worthington on May 27, 1932, the 12th of 14 children.

Sara lived a life grounded in her Christian faith and love. She was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, teacher and friend. She had a kind heart and gentle caring spirit and would help anyone in need.

Left to cherish her memories are her daughter, Kathy (Barry) French and son, Greg (Charlotte) Nisbet. She was also blessed with a bonus son, Craig (Pam) Beck. She was grandmother to eight grandchildren Brian French, Beth (Franky) Martinez, Elizabeth (Diosdado) Rodriguez, Avery (Melissa) Nisbet, Adam Nisbet, Sara (Hugo) Lanfranco, Wes (Cristina) Beck and Ben Beck.

She was the proudest of her 11 great-grandchildren who adoringly called her "Gigi." They are Vanessa, Ethan, and Valerie Rodriguez, Ava and Amelia Martinez, Ivy, Laurel and Cyrus Nisbet, Shiloh Lanfranco, Logan and Evan Beck and a host of nieces and nephews.

Sara was preceded in death by her parents, husband Carl, son Mason Edward "Rusty",, all of her siblings and their spouses Joseph, Lilian (Leon) Lister, Bill (Irene) Worthington, James (Annabelle) Worthington, Jesse (Jessie Lee) Worthington, Eduard (Mary) Worthington, Nell (Edgar) Morgan, Ann Worthington, Calvin Worthington, John (Bertie) Worthington and Cordelia Moran. Also, a granddaughter-in-law Cameron Beck.

She was raised in Paris, Ky. and graduated from Bourbon County High School in 1950. She went to Anderson College in Indiana where she married the love of her life, Carl Nisbet. They were married 64 years when Carl passed away in 2015. Together they shared a life rooted in faith.

Carl's calling to be a minister set the tone for the majority of her life in service to others. She was the epitome of a Christian woman who served her church and community as a Sunday school teacher, supporting her husband through years of home calls, hospital visits, weddings and caring for their congregation.

They moved to Juneau, Alaska in 1955 with a toddler and baby in her lap and all of their earthly belongings in the back of the car to pastor a church. In 1958 they moved to Wingate, Ind., where Carl pastored a church and attended seminary. In 1962 they moved to Florida and lived in a prison campus where he was a chaplain. In 1965 they moved to South Haven.

After the loss of her oldest son, Rusty, in 1966, she returned to college at Western Michigan University, where she earned a bachelor's and master's degree in education. Sara taught for 27 years at Central Elementary and after her retirement she and Carl enjoyed wintering in Georgia and traveling.

During their married life they visited all 50 states, most of the provinces of Canada, Mexico and many countries in Europe. She enjoyed spending time with her family.

Sara was a faithful member of the First Church of God in South Haven. She also volunteered with the South Haven Bronson Auxiliary for several years.

As we bid farewell to Sara Frances Worthington Nisbet, we do so with gratitude for her love, stories, generosity and the countless moments of joy she brought into our lives. Her memory will continue to be a source of inspiration and comfort for all who had the pleasure of knowing her. She lived a life well lived.

Sara will be laid to rest next to her husband Carl at Lakeview Cemetery.

Donations may be made to First Church of God 603 Green St. South Haven, Michigan, 49090.

To those who choose to leave a memory or condolence, go to www.starksfamilyfh.com.

Arrangements are entrusted to Filbrandt Chapel-Starks Family Funeral Homes and Cremation Services. 269-637-0333.

TOWNSHIP

From page A1

to cover the world, including land and water.

"Van Buren used it successfully for a couple kayakers lost in the river and it took, whatever department it was, right to the spot where the kids were at," DeBoer said.

Other items

The board adopted an amendment to the commercial segment of the short-term rental ordinance.

The amendment exempts rentals in the Community Service Commercial zoning district within the township, from the one rental per calendar week requirement.

The board approved a request from Wayne Pecina to remove his property from the city back to the township.

The property was part of the agreement between the city and township to promote the revitalization of the M-140 corridor to the Blue Star Highway.

Pecina began construction of two storage buildings in December of 2021. Construction of one storage building was finished in 2022, under township inspection.

Due to the agreement between the township and city, Pecina was unable to continue the construction of the second storage building.

The request to revert the property's location required approval from both the township and the city. The South Haven City Council approved Pecina's request during the May 5 city council meeting.

Contact: jnewell@southhaventribune.com, 269-637-1104

SLEEP

From page A1

you're slowly letting go of the gas pedal."

Parents can adjust their back-to-school plans based on what works best for their child. Nikkya Hargrove moves her twin daughters' bedtimes up by 30 minutes the week before school starts.

Sometimes, her 10-year-olds will negotiate for a few extra minutes to stay up and read. Hargrove said those conversations are important as her children get older and advocate for themselves. If they stay up too late and don't have the best morning, Hargrove said that can be a learning experience too.

"If they're groggy and they don't like how they feel, then they know, 'OK, I have to go to bed earlier,'" said Hargrove, an author and independent bookstore owner from Connecticut.

In the morning, soaking in some daylight by sitting at a window or going outside can help train the brain to power up, Verma said.

Squash back-to-school sleep anxiety

Sleep quality matters just as much as duration. First-day jitters can make it hard to fall asleep no matter how early the bedtime.

Dixon says parents can talk to their kids to find out what is making them anxious. Is it the first day at a new school? Is it a fear of making new friends? Then they might try a test run of stressful activities before school starts to make those tasks feel less scary – for example, by visiting the school or meeting classmates at an open house.

The weeks leading up can be jam-packed and it's not always possible to prep a routine in advance. But kids will adjust eventually so sleep experts say parents should do what they can. After all, their kids aren't the only ones adjusting to a new routine.

"I always say, 'Take a deep breath, it'll be OK,'" Dixon said. "And just start that schedule."

Michigan lawmakers propose $65 million grant program to lower elementary school class

By CRAIG MAUGER
The Detroit News (TNS)

David Guralnick / The Detroit News / TNS

Melvindale's Allendale Elementary School reported having four third grade classes with 30 students, six fourth-grade classes with 31 students and one fourth grade class with 32 students.

LANSING — Michigan senators unveiled bills this week that would launch a $65 million grant program aimed at lowering class sizes in elementary schools and capping the number of students in the rooms of participating districts at 19 kids.

The proposals, which have to be approved by the Senate and House to become law, would mark a significant change in current state education policy, which has allowed districts to set their own class sizes and has provided little information to the public about the decisions.

The new measures' introduction Tuesday came after a Detroit News investigation in April documented 206 elementary classes – ranging from kindergarten through fifth grade – across 49 schools over the 2023-24 and 2024-25 years that had at least 30 students in them. The News used open records requests to compile the data.

Sens. Dayna Polehanki, D-Livonia, and Darrin Camilleri, D-Trenton – two former teachers – sponsored the bills to establish the class size grant program.

"Decades of educational research show that small class sizes in early grades, especially high poverty districts lead to higher reading and math achievement, better classroom behavior and engagement, more individualized instruction and stronger relationships between teachers and students," Polehanki said.

At least 31 of the 50 states already have laws about class sizes, tie funding to small classes or set goals for their schools to attempt to meet.

As state leaders look for ways to improve struggling reading scores, Michael Rice, Michigan's outgoing superintendent of public instruction, has labeled achieving smaller class sizes for grades kindergarten through third in high-poverty schools "a top legislative priority for the Michigan Department of Education."

Under the new bills, the Department of Education would use $65 million to fund pilot programs aimed at maintaining or establishing small classes in grades kindergarten through third grade. Districts could apply for the money, but would have to have high percentages of economically disadvantaged students to qualify.

If districts received money through the initiative, they would have to maintain average class sizes in kindergarten through third grade of 17 students with a cap of 19 pupils, according to the text of the bills.

For the 2024-25 school year, The News examined 797 individual classes across 49 elementary schools. Of those, 8 percent of the classes had fewer than 20 students, while 63 percent had 25 or more students.

The bills would specifically require the Muskegon Heights Public School Academy System, Benton Harbor Area Schools, the Flint School District and the Wayne-Westland Community School District to be among those that receive grants under the program.

Polehanki said those school districts were selected by the Michigan Department of Education because of their demographics and differing geographic locations around the state.

Sen. John Damoose, R-Harbor Springs, questioned the selections in the initial bills and said the problem facing many districts is being able to hire enough teachers to lower class sizes.

"No matter how much money there is, we have a hard time hiring teachers," Damoose said of rural schools in his northern Michigan district.

Polehanki said she has heard an estimate that it would require $600 million in additional funding to hire two teachers in every elementary school across Michigan.

"We're starting with a pilot, and that's the best we can do right now," Polehanki said.

The Senate Education Committee took testimony on the class size bills on Wednesday, but didn't hold a vote.

The committee also took testimony on a proposal to prohibit schools from disenrolling students before ensuring they've enrolled somewhere else.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Jeremy Moss, D-Southfield, was inspired by a situation in Pontiac, where a mother, Kellie Bryant, was arrested in February and accused of leaving her three children to live alone in squalor for years. The children had disenrolled from one district but were never enrolled in another, meaning no one was tracking why they weren't attending school, Moss said.

The bill would make certain that some district remains responsible for tracking students' welfare, Moss said.

"We don't want any other child to fall through this crack and be lost in the system," Moss said.

Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard and Oakland County Prosecutor Karen McDonald spoke in support of the bill on Wednesday.

Al-Van Humane Society
Adopt ♥ Volunteer ♥ Donate ♥ Advocate
73303 8th Ave. PO Box 421 South Haven, MI 49090
phone 269.637.5062 fax 269.639.2242
Mon, Tue, Thurs, Fri 11 am to 5:30 pm; Sat 11 am to 3 pm; Wed, Sun Closed

Meet our Pet of the Week, Dax!

At just 11 months old and already tipping the scales at 65 pounds, Dax is a big pup with an even bigger personality! This goofy, gangly, lovable WILD child is bursting with energy and ready to take on the world, preferably at full zoom
Dax is all about playtime, whether it's chasing toys, running laps, or just being the center of attention. He's still learning the ropes of how to be a polite pup, so he'll need a patient and committed human who's ready to guide him through puppyhood and help him grow into the best big boy he can be. If you've got room in your heart (and your house) for a whirlwind of fun, slobbery kisses, and unfiltered joy, Dax is your guy. Get ready for a wild ride, you won't be bored with this pup around! To submit an adoption application visit us online at al-van.org/adopt.

Par-4-Paws

Join us for our annual Par 4 Paws golf outing on September 21st at Hawkshead Golf Course! This 4-person scramble kicks off at 10am and will be followed by a delicious lunch and a silent auction featuring a variety of great items. Whether you're a seasoned golfer or just out for a fun day on the greens, you'll be helping raise funds to support the animals at Al-Van Humane Society. Gather your team, enjoy a beautiful day of golf, and make a difference for pets in need! To sign-up visit our website at al-van.org or give us a call at (269) 637-5062.

THIS WEEK'S WISH LIST

This week our biggest need is HARD DOG CHEW TOYS. Hard dog chew toys like Kongs and Nylabone provide much-needed enrichment, helping to reduce stress and boredom for dogs during their stay at the shelter.

You can view our full wishlist at al-van.org/wishlist. All donations can be dropped off at our adoption center or Rescued Treasures (07591 Blue Star Highway, South Haven, MI 49090) during open hours, or shipped directly from our Amazon or Chewy wish lists Thank you so much for your support, the doggos, kittens and humans here at Al-Van really appreciate you!

Exceptional Heart Care

When it comes to your heart, you want the best. That's why more people choose Bronson for heart care than any other health system in southwest Michigan. Our cardiology team in Van Buren County is dedicated to quality and works closely with you and your primary care provider to develop a personalized plan of care. Whether your heart needs medical management, a procedure or surgery, when you choose one of us, you get the skill, compassion and fierce determination of a top team of experts!

Learn more at **bronsonhealth.com/heart**.

BRONSON

Spencer Manufacturing unveils stock truck

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — Michigan-based Spencer Manufacturing, Inc., a leader in customized fire apparatus, recently announced the release of the Initial Attack stock truck 1671.

According to a news release, the truck has a smaller, more agile body designed for rapid response in remote, rural or wildland environments.

Built on a Ford F-600 chassis and equipped with a full-body pump, it has the power to move over 2,000 gallons per minute using Hale's Qmax-Xs 1500 GPM pump.

"This groundbreaking configuration brings big-truck pumping power to a compact initial attack platform – typically the first apparatus to arrive on scene," the release stated.

The truck provides maximum water flow in critical early moments of a developing fire, enabling faster and more effective suppression.

"We're proud to bring forward innovations like this that make crews more effective and better equipped to protect their communities," President of Spencer Fire Trucks Grant Spencer said in the release.

Spencer Manufacturing, Inc. was founded in 1986 by volunteer firefighter Brian Spencer in South Haven, Mich. Nearly 40 years later, the family-owned company continues to serve departments across the country with purpose-built fire and rescue apparatus.

"Known for its unlimited customization, flexible build process, and exceptional craftsmanship, Spencer works side by side with fire departments to design and deliver apparatus that meets the unique needs of each fire department," the release stated.

The Initial Attack stock unit 1671 is available now for immediate delivery.

To learn more about Spencer Fire Trucks Initial Attack Stock unit 1671 go to www.spencerfiretrucks.com.

Photo provided

Spencer Manufacturing's newest truck, the Initial Attack Stock truck 1671 is designed for rapid response in remote, rural or wildland environments.

Bobby Walker honored at basketball tournament

By TRIBUNE STAFF

SOUTH HAVEN — The Bobby Walker Basketball Tournament was recently held for the 49th year.

According to news release, the tournament was held the weekend of the National Blueberry Festival at Elkenburg Park in South Haven.

A long standing tradition of the tournament includes a presentation of Leadership Awards to civic leaders, organizations and sponsors.

This year the ceremony had a twist with a surprise recognition of tournament founder Bobby Walker by the South Haven first responders in fire, EMS and law enforcement.

A special proclamation was read during the ceremony.

"Your unwavering support of public safety, commitment to community outreach and exemplary leadership have strengthened the bonds between citizens and first responders," the proclamation stated. "Through your efforts, you have inspired trust, fostered cooperation, and made South Haven a safer, stronger and more united place to live. We honor your generosity of time, talent, and spirit, and we thank you for the positive and lasting impact you have made in the lives of those we serve."

The recognition citation was presented to Walker by Brandon Hinz, executive director of South Haven Area Emergency Services and Adam DeBoer, interim chief of the South Haven Police Department.

The founder of the Bobby Walker Basketball Tournament was honored during the 49th tournament by Chief Brandon Hinz and Interim Police Chief Adam DeBoer.

Road improvements to begin in Bangor

By TRIBUNE STAFF

BANGOR — The Van Buren County Road Commission is partnering with Bangor Township and Bangor Public Schools to make improvements to Walnut Street.

According to a news release, the project involves applying a double chip seal with a fog seal over the existing gravel surface of Walnut Street from CR 681 west to the curve northward – a stretch of approximately 0.16 miles.

"Working with Bangor Public Schools to establish a special assessment district allowed us to raise the necessary funds," Bangor Township Supervisor Mike Sullins said in the release. "Because Walnut Street is not under the Road Commission's jurisdiction, the project required coordination between Bangor Schools, Bangor Township and the road commission. Navigating state laws can be complex, but thanks to the road commission's expertise, we were able to make this improvement a reality."

The cost-effective treatment is designed for low-traffic gravel roads and aims to:

- Eliminate the need for regular grading
- Reduce mud and dust
- Replace the use of chloride solutions for stabilization and dust control

The double chip seal creates a flexible "mat" surface that requires minimal maintenance, with repairs easily made using hot mix asphalt – similar to standard pothole patching.

The expected lifespan of the improved surface is five to seven years, with an estimated cost of $25,000.

Road Commission Managing Director Bret Witkowski said in the release that the same surface treatment was successfully applied to a more heavily traveled road in Decatur Township in 2021.

"We're pleased to offer this solution for Bangor Schools," Witkowski said. "The Decatur project has performed well during its evaluation phase, and we'll continue monitoring Walnut Street to make informed decisions in the future for roads under our jurisdiction."

For questions about the Walnut Street project, contact the Van Buren County Road Commission at 269-674-8011 or via email at vbcrc@vbcrc.org.

Former K-9 Maple sniffs out threats to Michigan State Univ. colonies

By MIKE HOUSEHOLDER
Associated Press

EAST LANSING, Mich. — Researchers at a Michigan State University facility dedicated to protecting honey bees are enlisting a four-legged ally to sniff out danger to the prized pollinators.

The Pollinator Performance Center's wide range of projects includes developing a training program for dogs to use their sensitive noses to uncover a bacterial disease called American foulbrood that threatens honey bee larvae.

Bees and other pollinators have been declining for years because of disease, insecticides, climate change and lack of a diverse food supply. A considerable portion of the human diet comes from plants pollinated by bees.

Maple, who once served as a human remains detection dog for the St. Joseph County sheriff's office, has created quite the buzz.

The panting 9-year-old English springer spaniel stood patiently on a recent weekday as Sue Stejskal, her longtime owner, trainer and handler, slowly placed the retired K-9 in a yellow protective suit. The garment includes a veil for her head and four booties worn on her paws in case Maple steps on a bee.

"Much like with humans, we recognize that if a dog is going to be in an active bee yard, they need to wear the same personal protective equipment as people do," said Stejskal, a Michigan State graduate who has been training dogs over a quarter-century for law enforcement and other uses. "You can't buy them on Amazon for dogs. So, there's been some altering and testing."

Maple suffered an injury while on a case in Ontario, forcing her to retire as a detection K-9 in 2024. But fate intervened.

Meghan Milbrath, an MSU professor whose lab studies risk factors that affect honey bees' health, was working to establish diagnostic and screening tools for honey bee diseases. A veterinarian who participated in a training about honey bees put Milbrath in touch with Stejskal.

They met, and the dog detection plan was born.

Stejskal then set about teaching an old dog a new trick. New to Maple, anyway. Maryland's agriculture department has also used canine detection methods in beehives.

Michigan State's objective is to train many more dogs to join the ranks. Milbrath said she is documenting Maple's training and plans to write a book with Stejskal to educate other teams about their strategy.

Maple, clad in her yellow suit, raced between hive boxes during a recent demonstration. When she found the scent clue left for her, Maple stopped at the box and coolly looked up at Stejskal.

"Good girl. Yes," Stejskal enthusiastically said, before removing Maple's veil and tossing a green, Michigan State-branded toy her way.

Stejskal recognizes the work they're doing is important.

"It's a cool project," Stejskal said. "But I was over-the-moon excited, because my dog would still have joy in her life and would still be able to work."

Mike Householder / AP photos

In this image made from video, handler Sue Stejskal lets Maple, an English springer spaniel, sniff a bee-themed dog toy at Michigan State University's Pollinator Performance Center Aug. 6, in East Lansing, Mich.

In this image made from video, an English springer spaniel named Maple pants while sitting on the grass at Michigan State University's Pollinator Performance Center Aug. 6, in East Lansing, Mich.

In this image made from video, Maple, an English springer spaniel wearing a protective suit, looks up at her handler, Sue Stejskal, at Michigan State University's Pollinator Performance Center Aug. 6, in East Lansing, Mich.

South Haven Tribune Classifieds

Classified Desk: 1-855-317-4292

Hours: Monday - Friday 9am-2pm EST

0100 ANNOUNCEMENTS

WE BUY JUNK CARS! DAMAGED? TOTALED? BROKEN? NOT RUNNING? WRECKED?

CALL 269-500-1711

0500 MERCHANDISE

WE BUY RIDING & COMMERCIAL MOWERS, TRACTORS, ATVS, GOLF CARTS, SCOOTERS, 4X4S, VEHICLES & ALL LAWN EQUIPMENT.

269-500-1711

MOTORCYCLES & SNOWMOBILES WANTED
$$ CASH PAID $$
ALL MAKES AND MODELS

269-500-1711

0900 LEGALS

CITY OF SOUTH HAVEN
PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
PLANNING COMMISSION

On Thursday, September 4, 2025, the Planning Commission for the City of South Haven will hear public comments related to the following request(s). The public hearing(s) will be held at 7:00 P.M. at City Hall, 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven concerning the following:

1. Special Land Use Application - 307 Spruce Street

Ms. Melissa Schlinger, on behalf of Black Pile Properties, has submitted a special land use application to use the dwelling unit located at 307 Spruce Street in the City of South Haven as a short-term rental. The parcel number for the referenced address is 80-53-877-010-00.

Supporting documentation is available for review at the Building Services office, 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090. Written comments may be submitted in lieu of or in addition to a personal appearance. Written comments must be received no later than 12 p.m. (noon) on Thursday, September 4, 2025. Written comments should be addressed to the Planning Commission and must be submitted to the Zoning Administrator at kdissette@southhavenmi.gov or via postal mail addressed to the Planning Commission and sent to 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090.

Individuals requesting reasonable accommodation for impairments or disabilities should contact the City Clerk no later than five days prior to the public hearing in person at City Hall, at 269-637-0750, or at mkiker@southhavenmi.gov.

Kelly Getman-Dissette
Zoning Administrator
(269) 637-0760
kdissette@southhavenmi.gov

0900 LEGALS

SOUTH HAVEN CHARTER TOWNSHIP
VAN BUREN COUNTY, MICHIGAN
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the Planning Commission of South Haven Charter Township will conduct a public hearing and regular meeting for the following matters on Wednesday, September 3, 2025 7:00 p.m. at the South Haven Township Hall, 09761 Blue Star Hwy, South Haven MI 49090.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the item(s) to be considered include the following:

1. Michael and Terry Hill Trust has petitioned to renew Planned Unit Development approval from October 1, 2014; 11 acres, 84-unit RV campground at 70544 & 70460 CR 388, 80-17-001-053-30 / 001-017-00

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that the application can be reviewed at the Township Hall during the zoning administrator hours Tues's 9-12p and Thurs's 1:30-4p or call 269-637-3305 / 1-800-626-5964 or request by email mtsallegan@frontier.com. Written comment may also be submitted to the zoning administrator.

PLEASE TAKE FURTHER NOTICE that written comments may be submitted to the Township Clerk at the address set forth below, during regular business hours of regular business days or by mail at the address set forth below, up to the date of the hearing and will also be accepted by the Planning Commission at the hearing.

South Haven Charter Township will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services to individuals with disabilities at the hearing upon seven (7) days' notice to the South Haven Charter Township Clerk.

South Haven Charter Township Hall
Brenda Bertorelli, Clerk
09761 Blue Star Highway
South Haven, MI 49090
269-637-3305

Covert Township Special Board Meeting held August 7, 2025, at 4:30pm
Covert Township Hall 73943 E. Lake St.
Covert, MI 49043

Call to order/Pledge of Allegiance
Roll call: Taylor, Rose, Pritchard, Rendell, Cook
Public Comment: A. Webb asked about the possibility of severance pay

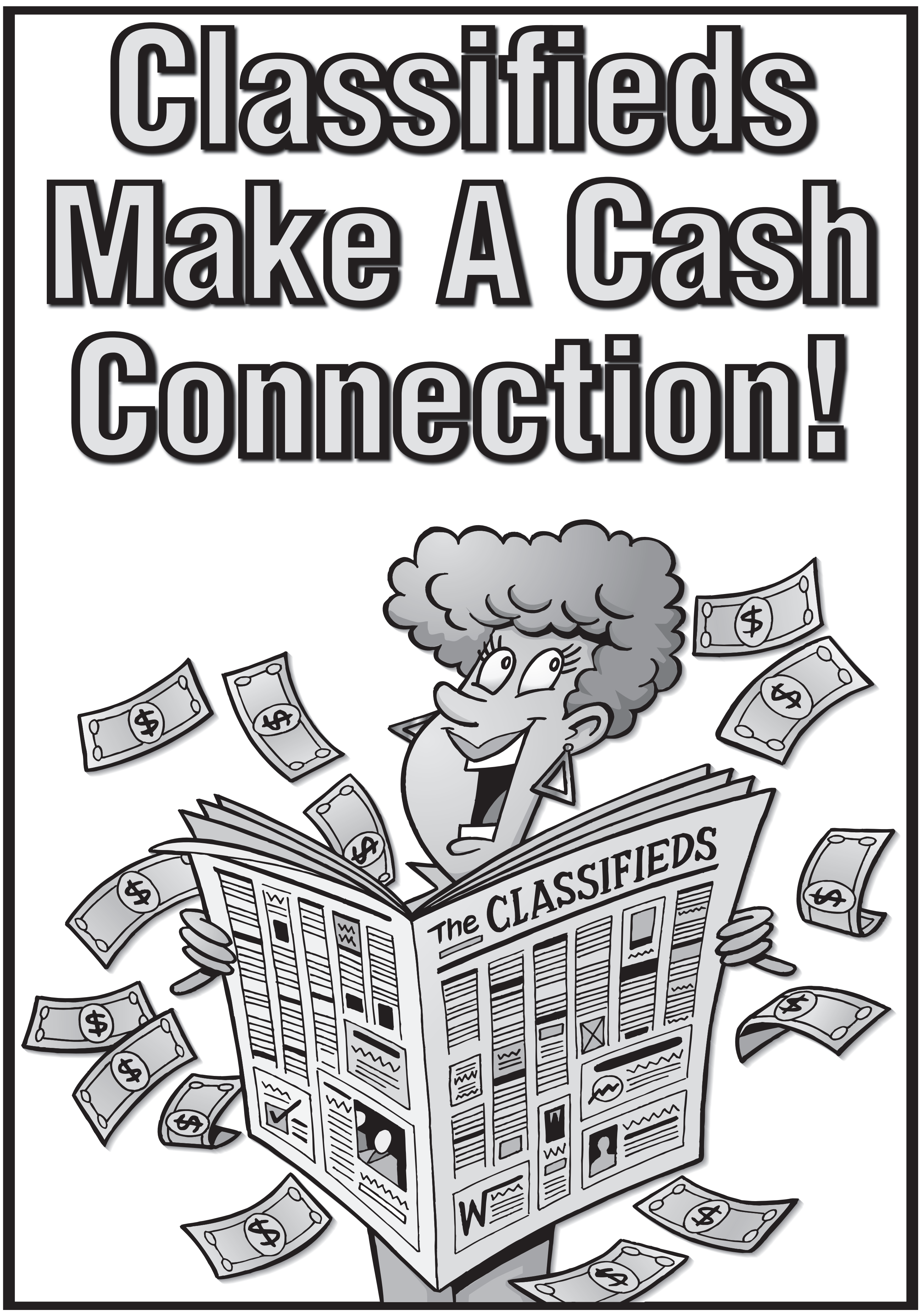
Motions approved:
*the agenda as presented
*to enter into closed session
*authorizing Supervisor Cook to sign the Consent Judgement with M140 Auto Parts, LLC with amendments
*to eliminate the Records Clerk position at the Police & Fire Complex
*to authorize Supervisor Cook to execute the BHS Insurance Renewal w/additions
*to revise and repost the FOIA Coordinator position

Public comment: B. Rose reports her embarrassment as a board member that raises have been issued but our township hall is often closed to staffing issues.

Adjourned at 7:40pm

Next Regular Township Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 12, 2025, at 6:00 PM at the Covert Township Hall, 73943 Lake Street.

Respectfully submitted by Wednesday Pritchard, Covert Township Clerk



Paw Paw school to focus on alternative education

By TRIBUNE STAFF

PAW PAW — Cedar Street Campus of Paw Paw Public Schools recently announced its goals for the 2025-2026 school year.

According to a news release, administrators and staff are focused on becoming the best choice for alternative, adult and online education in Van Buren County.

"With new leadership, updated classrooms and bold ideas, the educational programs at Cedar Street are innovative, flexible and strategically designed to meet the needs of today's students," the release stated.

The Cedar Street Campus offers qualified and certified teachers seated in the classroom, working alongside high school and adult education students with programs tailored to meet their individual educational goals.

"Leading the charge in a new, exciting role at Cedar Street is Sarah Chandler, lead teacher for alternative and adult education," Paw Paw Superintendent Jeremy Davison said in the release.

"Chandler brings four years' experience as an English teacher in the Alternative Education Program and a passion for helping students who benefit from a more flexible and supportive environment.

"Sarah will be working closely with Cedar Street teachers, staff and Paw Paw Public Schools Director of Curriculum and Instruction to serve the needs of Cedar Street students and the community."

Paw Paw Public Schools' Cedar Street Campus has been a part of the Paw Paw community for 72 years; first opening its doors as Cedar Street Elementary School in 1953

Over the years, it has served the community in many ways – acting as a home for adult education, online education, early childhood education, before-and after-school care and alternative education.

"While students of all ages, backgrounds and educational levels have walked its hallowed halls, the mission remains the same: to develop, support and inspire every student for lifelong success," the release stated.

To learn more about Cedar Street Campus, go to www.ppps.org or call 269-415-5700.

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

Photo provided / Tom Renner

South Haven Rotarians participated in the annual National Night Out event on Tuesday where they handed out 50 bike helmets in cooperation with Bronson Hospital's South Haven Safe Kids program.

Keeping work from spoiling vacation takes planning and the right phone settings

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) – For their 15th wedding anniversary, Katie Walley-Wiegert and her husband decided to take a beach vacation with their young son. But the trip didn't go as planned. Walley-Wiegert wound up needing to pack her computer because of a work assignment she couldn't ignore.

The 38-year-old marketing professional had just landed a podcast interview for an executive she worked with, and he had a short window to prepare. As she labored away through most of the vacation, she regretted not being present for her toddler's introduction to the ocean.

Navigating the line between work time and personal time is tricky for a lot of people. With laptop computers and smartphones making it possible to log in anytime to do work from anywhere, many find it hard to disconnect even when they take vacations.

Getting ready

Once you have your vacation dates set, let teammates know when you plan to be off. Make sure your time off is booked on your office's electronic calendar, which can reduce the number of work requests you receive while you're out, Amy Biedenstein, senior VP, said.

For many people, getting ready for vacation means working late the night before to finish time-sensitive tasks that can't wait until they're back. Try starting earlier. Assessing what needs to get done a week in advance may help reduce last-minute cramming.

You can also block off the afternoon before you leave to tie up loose ends and your first day back in the office to catch up, said time management and productivity coach Alexis Haselberger. Set the automatic replies on your email, Slack and other apps to say you're not checking messages and will respond the week of your return instead of your first day back, Haselberger advised.

If it's not possible to be completely out of touch, schedule times to check in on work and let co-workers know. You also can share your preferred way to be contacted in the event of an emergency.

AP Illustration / Peter Hamlin / AP

It starts with your phone

Amanda Olsen, a reporter for the Times Review Newsgroup on Eastern Long Island, doesn't mind answering occasional questions from work when she is taking a staycation to get things done around the house.

When she and her family take backpacking and multiday canoeing trips in the Adirondacks, Olsen, 47, turns off her cellphone's alerts and notifications. To further make the most of the time outdoors, Olsen sometimes camps in locations with no phone reception.

Some people recommend leaving work phones behind entirely during vacations. Others temporarily delete work apps such as Slack or email from their phones, although they may need help from tech support to reinstall the apps when they return.

If being unreachable is not an option, set a time to check work emails and notifications once in the morning, and then leave the phone behind for the rest of the day.

It starts at the top

Pressure to perform turns work into an obsession for some people, especially if they're concerned about getting a promotion. One coping strategy is a "quiet vacation" – traveling to a vacation destination discreetly but checking email regularly and doing some amount of work.

One way to improve the chances of vacationing without interruptions is to put a structured plan in place to hand off projects to colleagues, he said. Leaders can encourage those steps.

A manager or executive who immediately answers calls and emails, or checks in with employees instead of unplugging while on vacation, sends the message that the people working under them should do the same.

"When leadership models good behavior, when leadership can take a break and disconnect, then we see employees follow suit," Biedenstein said.

The benefits of a pause

Taking a clear break to recharge, refocus and take your mind off the daily stresses of the workplace is extremely healthy.

After work intruded on her wedding anniversary trip, Walley-Wiegert plans to go back to the same beach with her family. This time, as someone who now works as a freelancer, she's setting her own rules. She let her current and potential clients know that she'd be offline for a few days.

"This is my take two," she said.

GYPSUM PEAK ENERGY STORAGE

You're Invited!

Gypsum Peak Energy Storage
Open House

DATE
Wednesday, August 20, 2025

TIME
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

ADDRESS
Columbia Township Hall
53053 County Road 388
Grand Junction, MI 49056

We are excited to share project updates, answer your questions, and discuss how the Gypsum Peak team can be a good partner to the Van Buren County community. Light refreshments and snacks will be provided.

We hope to see you there!

RSVP TO
EMMANUEL.FYKE@VESPERENERGY.COM

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE GYPSUM PEAK PROJECT.

The Spotlight
A Weekly Guide To Services & Business Around Town.

Confused about your health insurance options?
Under 65 health plan available now
Call Dale K. Morgan "DK"
Your local Medicare expert since 1994
269-637-6619

JENSEN'S EXCAVATING INCORPORATED
Driveways • Water & Sewer • Septic Systems • Demolition
Crushed Concrete • Sand • Gravel • Stone • Topsoil
www.JensensExcavating.com
(269) 637-5642

Driver's License Restoration
It's a Process... We Can Help!
Drunk Driving & Criminal Defense
"Friends... Don't Let Friends Plead Guilty!"
Law Office of Frederick J. Taylor
269-388-6060 1-800-250-FRED

MILLER
D.L. MILLER FUNERAL HOME, INC.
Bangor Chapel
258 W. Monroe Street
Bangor, MI 49013
(269) 427-7551
Ryan K. Oliver, Owner/Manager
Bloomingdale Chapel
203 East Spring
P.O. Box 171
Bloomingdale, MI 49026
(269) 521-3121
Floyd Decker, Manager
Gobles Chapel
208 West Main
P.O. Box 6
Gobles, MI 49055
(269) 628-2852
D. Lee Miller, Manager

If interested in including your business here contact freid@thehp.com

R/J WATERPROOFING & CONTRACTORS
24 Hour Emergency Service
Wet Basement?
• Internal/External Drain Tile Systems
• Water Seepage • Structural Wall & Floor Cracks
• Damp Wet Crawl Spaces
• Bowed & Cracked Walls
• Sump Pump/Emergency Backup System
• Mold Removal & Drywall Repair
Roger Joyner
LOCAL 269-337-7660 • Cell 269-501-0915
EXPERIENCED IN ALL METHODS OF BASEMENT WATERPROOFING

How to tell when garden veggies are ripe for harvesting

By JESSICA DAMIANO
Associated Press

It's time – or getting to be time – for us gardeners to reap what we've sown.

Although it's fairly evident when some edibles, like tomatoes, are ripe for the picking, that isn't the case with every crop.

Telltale signs

Zucchini, for instance, doesn't change color. Although it might be tempting to grow a 15-inch-long squash, it will likely be tough. For optimal tenderness, pick individual fruits when they're 6-8 inches long.

All varieties of green beans should be harvested when they are about as thick as a pencil. Once the plant begins producing, check it every day or two and remove beans that are ready; the more you pick, the more the plant will make.

Green peppers can be harvested at any size but are considered fully mature when they turn red. As a bonus, red peppers are sweeter and contain more nutrients.

There isn't such a thing as an unripe cucumber – even small ones are crispy and juicy. The hazard here is allowing them to remain on the vine too long, which can result in an off-putting taste and texture. Cucumbers are considered mature when their bumpy skin smooths out.

You'll know sweet corn is ready as soon as the silk at the top of its ear turns brown. If you still aren't sure, peel back a small portion of husk and press your nail into a kernel; if it releases a milky fluid, it's ripe.

Cantaloupe will practically harvest itself when the time is right: A light tug will release the melon from its stem. If any force is required, it's not ready.

Honeydew melons are ripe when their bottoms begin to soften, and watermelons when their undersides turn a creamy white color.

Jessica Damiano / AP

Tomatoes maturing on the vine on Long Island, N.Y. Tomatoes are considered ripe when they are uniform in color.

Root crops

Determining when to dig up root crops can pose a bit more of a challenge, as they can't be visually assessed without disturbing them. But there are some signs to watch for.

You'll know garlic bulbs are mature when all but five leaves at the top of the plant have turned completely yellow or brown.

Onions are ready when their tops flop over and turn brown.

To assess beets, select one plant and push aside the soil at its base to expose the entire top of the root. Harvest when it measures between 1 ½ and 3 inches (3.8 and 5 centimeters) wide, depending on variety. If it's too small, cover it back up, water and try again in a week. Avoid allowing beets to get too big, however, or they'll lose sweetness and turn tough.

Standard potatoes are fully mature when their foliage dies back. But if it's the so-called "new" potatoes you're after, dig up the thin-skinned babies 2-3 weeks after the plant blooms. Early-maturing potato types will be ready sooner than the standard, so check tags for variety-specific details. (Note: Due to their delicate skin, new potatoes should be consumed immediately, as they do not store well.)

Carrots are ready when they poke up from underground but can be left in the soil, even into winter, until you need them.

Jessica Damiano writes weekly gardening columns for the AP and publishes the award-winning Weekly Dirt Newsletter.

SOUTH HAVEN COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Ongoing events

Visually impaired and blind persons support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. at Senior Services of Van Buren County.

Dementia and Alzheimer's caregivers support group meeting: Every third Wednesday of each month at 6 p.m. at Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church library.

Three Blondes Brewing: Trivia night on Thursdays at 7 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sundays at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.

Sparkle and Spice Boutique: Mom and Me play date. Fridays from 9-10 a.m.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for adults from 6-8 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of the month. Artists of any level can bring their own projects to work on. Basic art supplies will be available. Attendees must be 18 years old and over. Members are free, non-members cost $5.

South Haven Center for the Arts: Center Studio for ages 9 to 13 from 4-5:30 p.m. every Wednesday. Young artists are invited to create art at their own pace with an instructor to help guide as needed. Free workshop but a $10 donation is suggested to help cover cost of supplies.

South Haven Center for the Arts: "Altered Consumerism" exhibition from Aug. 8 through Sept. 20.

Candlelight Yoga: Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Church of Epiphany. Cost is $15.

Food pantry: First Congregational Church open from 10 a.m. to noon on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. It is a drive-up food pantry.

Food pantry: Sacred Heart Catholic Church. For Bangor residents only. Open from 1-4 p.m. on Thursdays.

Food, clothing, baby pantry: Lily of the Valley Church in Covert. Open from noon to 2 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Personal care and clothing pantry: First Assembly of God open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesdays. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Peace Lutheran Church open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Must call the central office to register.

Baby pantry: Simpson United Methodist Church in Bangor. Open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays. Must call the central office to register.

South Haven Memorial Library: Story Time on 11 a.m. to noon on Tuesdays starting Sept. 2.

South Haven Farm Market: Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. through October. Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. June through August at Huron Street Pavilion.

Daydreamer Domes: Local community pool day every Tuesday at 11 a.m.

HawksHead: Pasta on the Patio every Wednesday at 5 p.m.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Hands-on the Harbor every Thursday at 10:30 a.m.

Lake Arvesta: Summer at the pasture concert every Friday and Saturday at 6 p.m.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Storywalk "Fly, Butterfly" by Bonnie Bader from Aug. 1 through 31.

Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: New Exhibit – "The Adventures of Liberty Hyde Bailey – Chicago: 1872." Available during museum hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.

Michigan Maritime Museum: Fish Tales Story Time at 11 a.m. on Mondays through August.

August

18 – Kiwanis: South Haven Area Emergency Services Chief Brandon Hinz to give an update on emergency services. Noon at the Senior Services Center. All are welcome.

19 – Scott Club: The life of World War I soldier David Lee Sutfin presented by Steve Rossio at 1 p.m.

19 – Liberty Hyde Bailey Museum: Presentation on monarchs from Janice Wick of the Paw Paw Monarch Waystation. Free event.

20 – South Haven Memorial Library: Hooked on Yarn from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

21 – Riverfront Concert Series: Casco Community Band at 7 p.m. at the Municipal Marina lawn.

22 – South Haven Memorial Library: Root beer floats from 2 to 5 p.m.

22 – Michigan Maritime Museum: Rock the Boat from 7 to 10 p.m.

23 – American Legion Post #49: BBQ on the Bluff from 4 to 9 p.m.

23 – South Haven Memorial Library: Astronomy Club at 11 a.m.

23 – Liverpool Legends: "The Complete Beatles Experience" at 7:30 p.m. at Warner Vineyard in Paw Paw.

23 – South Haven Rod and Gun Club: Youth Shooting Sports Day. Free event for people ages 10 to 18 years old. Registration begins at 9 a.m. Event begins at 10 a.m.

27 – First Congregational UCC: Open Mic Night at 6 p.m.

28 – Riverfront Concert Series: Zion Lion, Kalamazoo's premier reggae band at 7 p.m. at the Municipal Marina lawn.

30-31 – All Crafts Fair: from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m on Saturday and from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday at Stanley Johnston Park.

Old-fashioned watchmaking schools are in demand

By DANIEL MILLER
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

TOP: Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times / TNS; ABOVE: Myung J. Chun / Los Angeles Times / TNS

TOP: Spencer Torok, a watchmaker at J.N. Shapiro Watches, in Torrance, California on July 24. **ABOVE:** Popular Rolex models include a green Submariner dive watch that collectors have nicknamed "the Hulk," and the GMT-Master II at Gamzo and Co. in Los Angeles, California, on April 9.

Ever since watches began bringing order to the ephemeral passage of time, they also started doing something else: breaking.

Own one long enough and something will probably go wrong. It'll run slow. Or fast. Or stop altogether.

Decades ago, watch repair shops across the country were staffed with technicians who could service almost any mechanical timepiece when its intricate innards – tiny gears, wheels and springs – failed. But when the U.S. watchmaking industry declined in the mid-20th century, the number of craftspeople who could fix or fabricate timepieces began dwindling too.

There were 1,880 U.S. watch and clock repairers in 2023, down from 2,430 just three years earlier, according to data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

That 23 percent decline, on top of previous losses, has led some in this niche industry to label the situation a workforce crisis. It comes amid renewed interest in mechanical timepieces and a modest rebirth of the American watchmaking industry – despite the omnipresence of cellphones and their effortless timekeeping. Rolex, the Swiss behemoth, alone makes more than 1 million watches a year.

Who will be able to service all of them as they age? Or make the new ones being dreamed up?

A dearth of new watchmaking schools – where students learn about repairs, fabrication or both – is central to the problem. After the closure of several programs in recent decades, only four full-time, independent watchmaking schools remain in the U.S.

One watch company, Torrance, California-based J.N. Shapiro Watches – maker of the $70,000 Resurgence model – is among the handful of U.S.-based firms that has struggled to hire watchmakers.

Rolex has a solution on the repair side.

In September, the Geneva-based company debuted a new watchmaking school at the Rolex Watch Training Center in Dallas. The program's 18-month curriculum is focused on training students to service watches made by the brand. The last six months of schooling include an immersion component in which students repair Rolex timekeepers under the supervision of instructors.

Upon graduation, participants can work for a Rolex-affiliated jeweler or for the company itself. Most of the school's first class, which graduates next February, have already secured jobs, a Rolex spokesperson said. They can expect annual salaries starting in the range of $75,000 to $85,000, depending on location.

The school is free. The company spokesperson said in a statement that the Dallas program, which welcomes just 27 students per class, represents the company's "commitment at a larger scale to meet the industry demand."

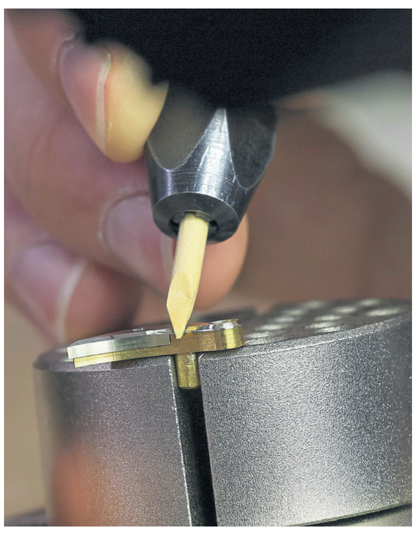
Rolex's focus on training watchmakers to work solely on its timepieces differentiates its program from independent schools, which typically teach students how to work on all sorts of watches, turning out graduates with expertise in subjects including micro-mechanics and repairs.

"I think we need a balance of technicians and then more full-service watchmakers," said Tony Traina, who publishes Unpolished Watches, an industry newsletter. "The way in which the profession is evolving right now – it seems like we're headed in that direction. There are the Shapiros of the world, along with the Rolexes of the world. I think we'll reach an equilibrium."

Rolex opened a more traditional watchmaking school in the U.S. in 2001 – the Lititz Watch Technicum in Pennsylvania, but closed it after its final class graduated this summer. The Rolex school in Dallas is in high demand, with 400 applicants for its inaugural class and 560 more for the second one starting in September.

Among the applicants, the spokesperson said, were Texans who'd initially been surprised that fixing watches could be "a viable career with an established educational track."

The average student age among the first two classes is 28; some have been admitted straight out of high school and others have a college degree. Students have backgrounds in areas such as engineering and accounting, and have had careers as musicians, teachers and communications professionals.



Robert Gauthier / Los Angeles Times / TNS

Spencer Torok, a watchmaker at J.N. Shapiro Watches, polishes a piece for a Resurgence series watch in Torrance, California on Thursday, July 24, 2025.

As head of an independent watch company, Joshua Shapiro said it was extremely difficult to find the six watchmakers who now work for him in Torrance.

"It took a lot of networking," said Shapiro, who added that his team was assembled over several years, and that three of his watchmakers came from the Lititz school.

One of those watchmakers is Spencer Torok, 25, who graduated from Lititz three years ago. After high school, the Hilliard, Ohio, native attended Ohio Dominican University, where he took accounting classes. But Torok realized during the COVID-19 pandemic that he wanted to make a change. He'd long been interested in watches, he said, and enrolled at Lititz.

Torok said that the schooling only stoked his passion – and that he would never have gotten hired by Shapiro if not for the education he received at Lititz. "No way," he said with a laugh. "It takes a lot of resources to train someone."

Some American watch companies have had to go abroad to make hires.

Cameron Weiss, whose eponymous watch company was founded in L.A. in 2013 and later moved to Nashville, said he had to turn to Switzerland to recruit a watchmaker. "I'd been looking for someone with that skill level for the last 12 years," said Weiss.

In July, Weiss traveled again to Switzerland to scout for workers. He hopes the Rolex program in Dallas will help invigorate watch education in the U.S.

One of the last remaining full-service watchmaking schools in America is at Paris Junior College in Texas. Program coordinator Garrin Fraze, 24, graduated from it in 2019. He was enticed back last year by a former instructor, who asked him to take over.

"Because we are independent, we have a little bit of openness in the curriculum," said Fraze, who also serves as head instructor of the program.

Like the Rolex school in Dallas, the Paris program is small, accommodating about 20 students. But Fraze hopes to expand it – he knows how strong demand is for watchmakers, including those who can repair Rolexes.

After his graduation from the Paris program, he got a job as the in-house watchmaker of a Fort Worth jeweler.

It was an authorized Rolex dealer.

FOCUS

Chris Torres / Fort Worth Star-Telegram / TNS

Ricardo Carranza uses a heated metal insert to shape the inside of the glove.

Nation's only maker of baseball gloves is in North Texas – *take a look*

By MATTHEW ADAMS
Fort Worth Star-Telegram (TNS)

There's a lot that goes into making Nokona baseball gloves stand out in the crowded sporting goods marketplace, but the thing that makes them most unique is the little tag on each one that says "Made in America."

Being the last U.S.-made baseball glove company left standing is a nice claim to fame, though it does come with challenges at a time when every other glove maker is manufacturing overseas for a fraction of the cost. Still, after some tough times in decades past, Nokona's business is strong as the company prepares to celebrate its 100th year of making leather goods in Nocona, Texas, a town of about 4,000 people 90 minutes north of Fort Worth.

The making of a mitt

The Nokona factory is smaller than you'd imagine, and that's part of the charm. Half the building is filled with state-of-the-art machines to map and cut leather, and the other half is filled with about a dozen or so craftspeople who stitch and form each glove by hand, pretty much the way it's been done for a century.

Sheets of leather come in through the back door, and their first stop is a big examination table. Steer hides are like any other hides, including yours, and they're sometimes covered with the scratches and scars of a life lived. A Nokona employee looks each one over, marking imperfections with a laser wand.

The usable portion of the hide – usually 70 percent to 80 percent of it – is mapped using a computer program that overlays a template of all the glove parts that can be cut from that piece of leather. From there, each part – glove fingers, webbing pieces, etc. – is cut using a machine. And that, for the most part, concludes the mechanized portion of the process.

Each glove follows the same steps. First, the linings are stitched together. Since this is the part of the glove no one sees, this is where the newbies start at Nokona.

One of Nokona's owners, Rob Storey, the great-grandson of the company's founder, said it takes about four months to master sewing the linings. From there, employees graduate to sewing exterior portions of the gloves. Only the best craftspeople end up doing the final stitching and lacing.

Of the 340 million people in the U.S., Storey said, less than 10 are skilled enough to do that, and they all work at Nokona.

The last step is breaking the gloves in. This used to be done by hitting them with a wooden mallet, the way you probably broke in a ballglove when you were a kid. Today, it's done with a pneumatic machine that pounds each glove into shape, softening them as it goes.

Along the way, logos are stitched into the leather, embossing is done using hot metal plates and flair is added to the custom-made gloves. The trend this season is wild colors, so you'll find a lot of gloves with turquoise or Day-Glo orange laces and embellishments. With Nokona's custom ordering process, you can be as conservative or as avant garde as you want to be in designing your glove.

And if steerhide isn't your thing, you can select more exotic skins for your ballglove, too. Kangaroo hide is quite possibly the best leather for a baseball glove, said Storey. It's strong and stretchy, with a rubbery sheen to it. The only downside is that it's a bit thin, so you have to layer it.

Nokona also makes gloves using elephant, alligator and python skin, among others, all of which come from reputable and sustainable sources in the U.S., said Storey.

A storied history on the diamond

Nokona has specialized in baseball gloves since 1934. The company started in 1926 as Nocona Leather Goods manufacturing purses and wallets. Then the Great Depression hit.

"The only way you could sell a wallet for a buck in those days was if you stuffed a dollar bill inside it," Storey joked.

Storey's great-grandfather pivoted to sporting goods and the rest is history.

Despite the hard times of the 1930s and 1940s – or perhaps because of them, and the escape recreation offered – baseball was booming. Nokona caught the wave, and by the late 1940s the company was outfitting the Brooklyn Dodgers-affiliated Fort Worth Cats.

In those days, the players would travel to away games by bus up U.S. Route 81 and stop in Nocona to pick up new gloves or drop old ones off for repairs.

Two of those Cats players made the big club in Brooklyn, and in the 1953 World Series, legendary Dodgers pitcher Carl Erskine wore a Nokona glove on the mound when he faced the New York Yankees.

Fast forward 70 years, and pitcher Ryan Pressly had on a Nokona gove when he recorded the final out for the Houston Astros in their World Series victory over the Philadelphia Phillies.

There's a signed Erskine jersey hanging in Nokona's headquarters, along with photos of Pressly and other big leaguers, like Nolan Ryan, who have used and endorsed Nokona products over the years.

Two of MLB's biggest names, Pittsburgh Pirates phenom Paul Skenes and Royals star Bobby Witt wear Nokona belts on the diamond. The belts are a newer offering from Nokona, and they have proven popular with the pros. Recently, Nokona even provided special gold belts to several players in the 2025 MLB All-Star game.

Glove economics 101

"Made in America" is something of a rallying cry these days. The Trump administration has promised steep import tariffs to revive U.S. manufacturing. Some tariffs have gone into effect while others are on hold.

For now, Storey said, Nokona hasn't seen a positive or negative impact. While all of their leather comes from U.S. sources, some is tanned in Japan and then reimported to the U.S. That product has had the same tariff for years, said Storey, and it hasn't changed.

When asked about protective trade policies perhaps helping Nokona, Storey didn't seem to think it would make a big difference. Nokona gloves are known and appreciated as a specialty product, with a price tag commensurate with their reputation.

You can walk into any sporting goods store and pick up a decent Rawlings or Wilson adult baseball glove for about $80 on the low end up to around $400 on the high end. Nokona gloves start at around that $400 price point, and they go up from there.

If Wilson and Rawlings have to charge a little more for a glove made in China because of higher tariffs, it's probably not going to be enough to drive your average American consumer to buy a Nokona glove.

It's just a difference in business models. Nokona manufactures around 0.1 percent of all the baseball gloves made each year. Whereas Rawlings and Wilson are mass producing millions of gloves, Nokona makes about 500 a week.

Like with high-end cars or watches, loyal connoisseurs swear by the brand. Storey opens the factory a few times a week for tours, and he's had guys come in with tears in their eyes, like they're making a pilgrimage to a holy site.

That's not to say it's always been easy. There was a time in the 1970s when Nokona was in danger. The other glove companies had moved overseas, and with an energy crisis and inflation running rampant, people weren't spending good money on ballgloves.

Storey's grandfather, Bob Storey, said he'd "just as soon get a bucket of worms and go fishing" as move his factory out of Nocona, so the family stuck it out. The popularity of adult slow-pitch softball in the 1980s and 1990s helped pull Nokona from a period of decline.

Having weathered those difficult years, Storey is ready to go all out for the 100th anniversary. Nokona is going to begin offering centennial-themed products this fall. Next summer, Storey wants to host a big party in Nocona to celebrate the milestone. He's a musician in his spare time, a drummer, so he's thinking about something involving bands, good food and cold beer. Maybe even some sandlot baseball games.

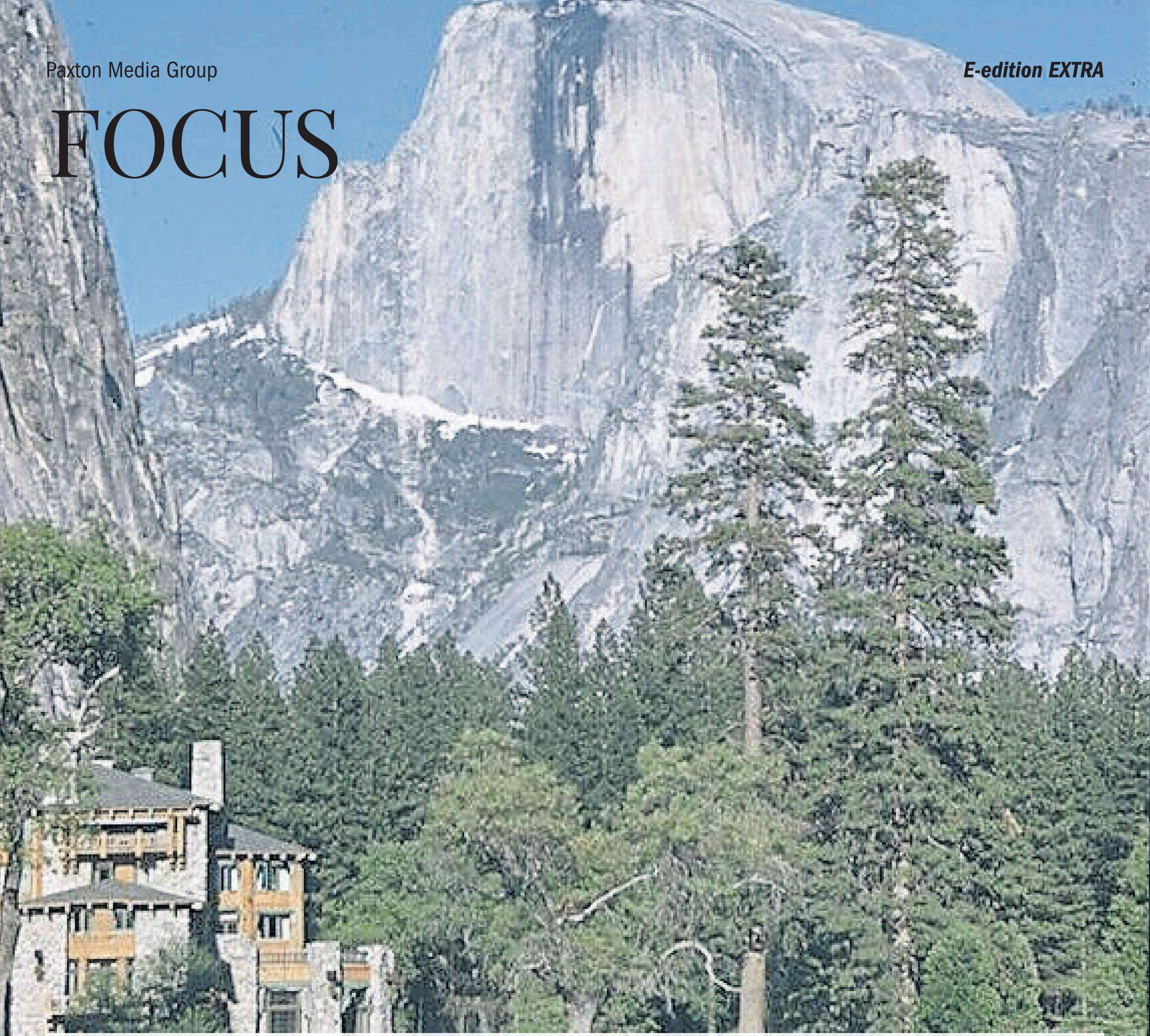
The centerpiece for the 100th celebration is already in the works: A 72-inch baseball glove, constructed by hand with parts made to scale, to display in Nokona's new retail space at the factory. Storey also wants to create a one-of-a-kind $100,000 glove made from parts of Nokona gloves going back to the 1930s, with added diamond inlays, to auction for charity.

However Nokona ends up marking the centenary, Storey is happy with where the company is and where it's going. In fact, he said he's already thinking ahead to Nokona's 200th anniversary.

It's that kind of hope that has always coursed through the hearts and minds of baseball lovers. The hope that this'll be the year your team wins it all. The hope that little leaguers harbor of one day making the big show.

When you're the underdog, that kind of hope sustains you, and in the baseball glove game, Nokona is certainly an underdog. They've always been and always will be the small market team competing against the big boys with deeper pockets.

Except in movies, wealth and power usually win in the end. But sometimes, even in real life, the little guy comes out on top. And that, in a nutshell, is the story of Nokona.



Yosemite embodies the long war over U.S. national park privatization

By MICHAEL CHILDERS
Colorado State University (The Conversation)

THE CONVERSATION

The Trump administration's cuts to the National Park Service's budget and staffing have raised concerns among park advocates and the public that the administration is aiming to further privatize the national parks.

The nation has a long history of similar efforts, including a wildly unpopular 1980 attempt by Reagan administration Interior Secretary James Watt to promote development and expand private concessions in the parks. But debate over using public national park land for private profit dates back more than a century before that.

As I explain in my forthcoming book, no park has played a more central role in that debate than Yosemite, in California.

Early concerns

In early 1864, Central American Steamship Transit Company representative Israel Ward Raymond wrote a letter to John Conness, a U.S. senator from California, urging the government to move swiftly to preserve the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoia trees to prevent them from falling into private hands. Five months later, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Yosemite Grant Act, ceding the valley and the grove to the state of California, "upon the express conditions that the premises shall be held for public use, resort, and recreation." This was years before Yellowstone became the first federal land designated a national park in 1872.

Controversy arose quickly at Yosemite. Two men – James Lamon and James Hutchings – had claimed land in the valley before the federal government gave it to California. Both began commercial operations, Lamon growing cash crops and Hutchings operating a hotel.

California said their businesses threatened the state's ability to develop roads and trails in Yosemite by competing for tourist dollars. A legal battle ensued and was not resolved until an 1872 U.S. Supreme Court ruling found that the men's land claims had not been fully validated according to the procedures of the time. The California legislature paid both men compensation for their land, and both left the park.

In 1890, neighboring parts of the Yosemite area became America's third national park – and in 1906, the federal government again took possession of the Yosemite Valley itself and the Mariposa Grove, specifically to incorporate them into an expansion of the national park.

Development rights

Yet, as my research has found, the role of private interests in the park remained unsolved. Private companies under contract to the National Park Service have long provided needed amenities such as lodging and food within the national parks. But questions over what is acceptable in national parks in the pursuit of profit have shaped Yosemite's history for generations.

In 1925, I found, the question centered on the right to build the first gas station inside the park, in Yosemite Valley. Two private businesses, the Curry Camping Company and the Yosemite National Park Company, had long competed for tourist dollars within the park. Each wanted to build a gas station to boost profits.

Frustrated over the need to decide, National Park Service Director Horace Albright ordered the rival firms to simplify management of the park's concessions. The companies merged, and the newly formed Yosemite Park and Curry Company was granted the exclusive rights to run lodges, restaurants and other facilities within the park, including the new gas station.

But as I found in my research, the park service and the concessions company did not always see eye to eye on the purpose of the park. The conflict between profit and preservation is perhaps most clearly illustrated by the construction of a ski area within the park in the early 1930s. The park service initially opposed the development of Badger Pass Ski Area as not conducive to the national park ideal, but the Yosemite Park and Curry Company insisted it was key to boosting winter use of the park.

In 1973, the Music Corporation of America, an entertainment conglomerate, bought the Yosemite Park and Curry Company. The company already had a tourist attraction operating near Hollywood, where visitors could pay to tour movie sets, but had not yet changed its name to Universal Studios or launched major theme parks in Florida and California. Its purchase of the park's concessions set off a firestorm of controversy over fears of turning Yosemite into a theme park.

That didn't happen, but annual park visitor numbers climbed from 2.5 million to 3.8 million over the 20 years MCA ran the concessions, which sparked concerns about development and overcrowding in the park. Conservationists argued the park service had allowed the corporate giant to promote and develop the park in ways that threatened the very aspects of the park most people came to enjoy.

National Park Service photo

TOP: Half Dome and the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite National Park. **ABOVE:** The ski lodge at Yosemite's Badger Pass Ski Area, pictured in 1936.

With three restaurants, two service stations with a total of 15 gas pumps, two cafeterias, two grocery stores, seven souvenir shops, a delicatessen, a bank, a skating rink, three swimming pools, a golf course, two tennis courts, kennels, a barbershop, a beauty shop, Badger Pass Ski Area and three lodges, the Yosemite Valley was a busy commercial district. Critics argued that such development contradicted the park service's mandate to leave national parks unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.

Who owns the names?

Falling profits and consolidation within the music industry led MCA to sell its concessions rights in Yosemite in 1993. The Delaware North Companies, a global hospitality corporation, took over and ran the park's concessions until 2016, when it sold the rights to Aramark.

But in that sale, the question of public resources and private profits arose again. Delaware North demanded $51 million in compensation for Aramark continuing to use the names of several historic properties within the park, such as the Ahwahnee, a hotel, and Curry Village, another group of visitor accommodations. The company claimed those names were a part of its assets under its contract with the park service.

The park service rejected the claim, saying the names, which dated back more than a century, belonged to the American people. But to avoid legal problems during the transition, the agency temporarily renamed several sites, including calling the Ahwahnee the Majestic Yosemite Hotel and changing Curry Village to Half Dome Village. Public outrage erupted, denouncing the claim by Delaware North as commercial overreach that threatened to distort Yosemite's heritage. In 2019, the park service and Aramark agreed to pay Delaware North a total of $12 million to settle the dispute, and the original names were restored.

Renewed interest in commercial efforts

In June 2025, Yosemite again took center stage in the dispute over the role of federal funding versus private interests at the start of the second Trump administration when a group of climbers unfurled an American flag upside down off El Capitan in protest of the administration's cuts in personnel and slashing of the park service's budget.

Conservationists, including former National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis, argued that by defunding the park service and laying off as much as a quarter of its workforce, the Trump administration was "laying the groundwork to privatize" the national parks by allowing corporate interests more access to public lands. Those concerns echo ones raised during the first Trump administration, when the White House argued privatization would better serve the American public by improving visitor experiences and saving federal dollars.

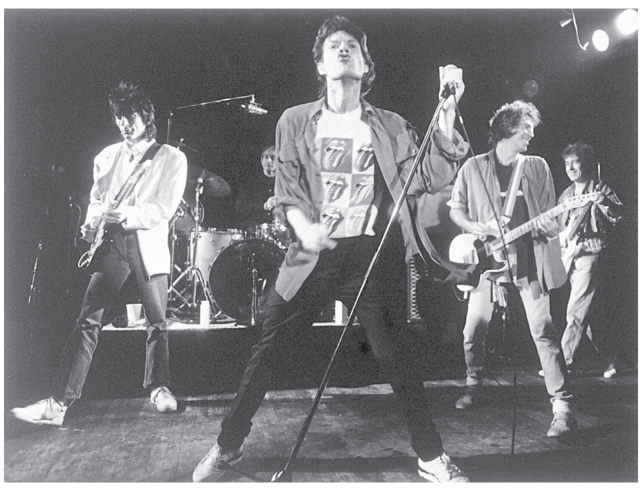
Whichever side prevails in the short term, the debate over the role of private interests within national parks like Yosemite will undoubtedly continue.

Michael Childers is an associate professor of history at Colorado State University.

FOCUS

Jessica Hill / AP

A mural of past concerts at Toad's Place is displayed above one of the bars in New Haven, Conn., on May 9.

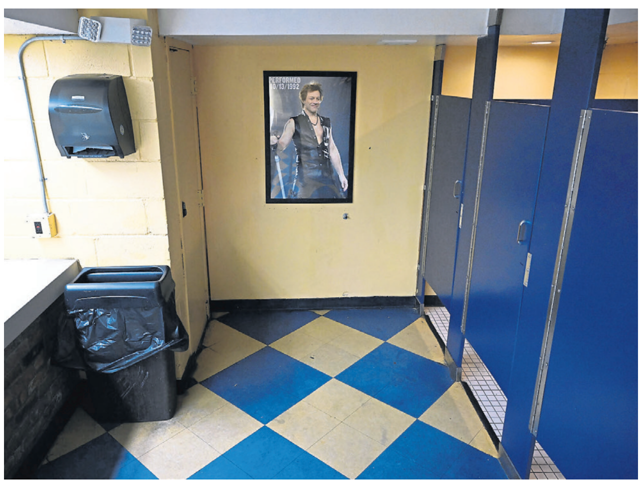


Dimo Safari / AP file photo

The Rolling Stones perform during an impromptu concert at the Toad's Place nightclub in New Haven, Conn., early Sunday, Aug. 13, 1989.

Jessica Hill / AP

Brian Phelps, owner of Toad's Place, looks over newspaper clippings he has collected about the famous concert venue in New Haven, Conn., on May 9.



Jessica Hill / AP

A poster of Jon Bon Jovi with the date he performed is displayed in the women's bathroom at Toad's Place in New Haven, Conn., on May 9.

From the Stones to Cardi B, this college haunt has attracted big acts for 50 years

By DAVE COLLINS
Associated Press

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — Nestled on a narrow, one-way street among Yale University buildings, a pizza joint and an ice cream shop, Toad's Place looks like a typical haunt for college kids.

But inside the modest, two-story building is a veritable museum of paintings and signed photos depicting the head-turning array of artists who've played the nightclub over the years:

The Rolling Stones. Bob Dylan. Billy Joel. Bruce Springsteen. U2. The Ramones and Johnny Cash. Rap stars Kendrick Lamar, Drake, Kanye West, Cardi B, Run-D.M.C., Snoop Dogg and Public Enemy. Blues legends B.B. King, Bo Diddley, Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon and John Lee Hooker. And jazz greats Count Basie, Dizzy Gillespie and Herbie Hancock.

This year, the New Haven institution is celebrating 50 years in business. And the people who made it happen are reflecting on Toad's success in attracting so many top acts to a venue with a standing-only capacity of about 1,000.

"You know, I thought it would be good for a few years and then I'd be out doing something else," said owner Brian Phelps, 71, who started as the club's manager in 1976. "And then the thing started to happen when some of the big bands started to come here."

Music and cheap beer fuel success

Original owner Mike Spoerndle initially opened Toad's Place in January 1975 as a French restaurant with two friends he later bought out. Before that, the building had been a burger and sandwich joint.

But when the restaurant got off to a slow start, Spoerndle had an idea for bringing in more customers, especially students: music, dancing and beer. A Tuesday night promotion with bands and 25-cent brews helped turn the tide.

Among the acts who performed was New Haven-born Michael Bolotin, who would change his name to Michael Bolton and go on to become a Grammy-winning ballad writer and singer.

The gregarious and charismatic Spoerndle, who died in 2011, endeared himself to bands and customers. A local musician he tapped as Toad's booking agent used his connections to bring in area bands and, later, major blues acts.

Then, in 1977, came a crucial moment. Spoerndle met and befriended concert promoter Jim Koplik, who would bring in many big names to Toad's over the years, and still does today.

"Mike knew how to make a really great room and Brian knew how to really run a great room," said Koplik, now president of Live Nation for Connecticut and upstate New York.

A year later, Springsteen stopped by Toad's to play with the Rhode Island band Beaver Brown after he finished a three-hour show at the nearby New Haven Coliseum.

In 1980, Billy Joel stunned Toad's by picking it – and several other venues – to record songs for his first live album, "Songs in the Attic."

That same year, a little-known band from Ireland would play at Toad's as an opening act. It was among the first shows U2 played in North America. The band played the club two more times in 1981 before hitting it big.

An unforgettable show for $3.01

On a Saturday night in August 1989, Toad's advertised a performance by a local band, The Sons of Bob, and a celebration of Koplik's 40th birthday, followed by a dance party.

The admission price: $3.01.

After The Sons of Bob did a half-hour set, Spoerndle and Koplik took the stage.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Spoerndle said.

Koplik followed with, "Please welcome the Rolling Stones!"

The stunned crowd of around 700 erupted as the Stones kicked off an hourlong show with "Start Me Up."

"Thank you. Good, good, good. We've been playing for ourselves the last six weeks," Mick Jagger told the crowd.

The Stones had been practicing at a former school in Washington, Connecticut, for their upcoming "Steel Wheels" tour – their first in seven years – and had wanted to play a small club as a warmup. The band's promoter called Koplik, who recommended Toad's. The band agreed, but insisted on secrecy.

Those at Toad's kept a lid on it for the most part, but swirling rumors helped pack the club.

Doug Steinschneider, a local musician, was one of those at the venue that night after a friend told him the Stones would be playing. He wasn't able to get in, but managed to get near a side door where he could see Jagger singing.

"It was amazing!" said Steinschneider. "For being a place where major bands show up, it's a tiny venue. So you get to see the band in their real element. In other words, you're not watching a screen."

A few months later, Bob Dylan's manager reached out looking for a club where he could warm up for an upcoming tour.

Dylan's 1990 show at Toad's sold out in 18 minutes. He played four-plus hours – believed to be his longest performance – beginning with a cover of Joe South's 1970 song "Walk a Mile in My Shoes" and ending with his own "All Along the Watchtower."

"That was a good one," Phelps recalled.

Variety is the key to longevity

Phelps – who bought out Spoerndle's stake in Toad's in 1998 – believes the secret to the venue's longevity has been bringing in acts from different genres, along with events such as dance nights and "battle of the bands". Rap shows especially draw big crowds, he said.

Naughty by Nature and Public Enemy played Toad's in 1992. After releasing his first album, Kanye West played there in 2004 with John Legend on keyboards. Drake played Toad's in 2009, early in his music career. And Snoop Dogg stopped by to perform in 2012 and 2014.

"When you have all these things, all ages, all different styles of music, and you have some dance parties to fill in where you need them, especially during a slow year, it brings enough capital in so that you can stay in business and keep moving forward," Phelps said.

On a recent night, as local groups took the stage for a battle of the bands contest, many were in awe of playing in the same space where so many legends have performed.

Rook Bazinet, the 22-year-old singer of the Hartford-based emo group Nor Fork, said the band members' parents told them of all the big acts they'd seen at the New Haven hot spot over the years. Bazinet's mom had seen Phish there in the '90s.

"Me, the Stones and Bob Dylan," Bazinet added. "I'm glad to be on that list."

HEALTH

Student loan caps might worsen the national doctor shortage, critics say

By **SHALINA CHATLANI**
Stateline.org (TNS)

Jnaiah Price / Stateline / TNS

EMT Michaela Bonner stands outside a local hospital in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Bonner has been working 12-hour shifts for years trying to save up money to go to medical school. But now that President Donald Trump's signature tax and spending law caps professional student loans, she's worried her dreams of becoming a doctor are financially out of reach.

Twenty-eight-year-old Michaela Bonner has been working 12-hour shifts as an emergency medical technician in Norfolk, Virginia, for the past four years, while attending and paying for college to finish her prerequisites for medical school.

But now that President Donald Trump's signature tax and spending law bars students from borrowing more than $50,000 annually in unsubsidized federal loans for medical school, Bonner is worried her dream of becoming a doctor is financially out of reach.

"I get told, 'Well, we really need you. We have a physician shortage, and you've done all this work leading up to this point,' and that's true as well, and it's not that I want to quit," Bonner said in a recent interview. "But there are no systems in place that I can rely on to support me now that I can't take out the full cost of living through loans."

The tax and spending law includes provisions that significantly alter the student loan process for higher education. The law halts current student loan repayment plans for loans that are granted on or after July 1, 2026. On that date, the law also terminates Grad PLUS loans, which have helped people pay for their higher education degrees and total cost of attendance. Current borrowers will be grandfathered in.

The federal law gives current borrowers enrolled in loan repayment plans for students based on income – such as those plans known as SAVE or IBR – until July 1, 2028, to switch to a new plan. Interest collection will resume Aug. 1 for students enrolled in the Biden-era SAVE plan.

At the same time, medical or law school students hoping to get unsubsidized federal loans – in which the borrower is responsible for paying the interest at all times rather than the government – will only be able to borrow $50,000 per year, with a $200,000 lifetime cap. Those seeking advanced degrees in areas such as history or philosophy have a $100,000 lifetime cap.

The average yearly cost of medical school for the 2024-25 academic year ranged from around $42,000 to $72,000, depending on whether the school was private or public and whether the student was a resident or nonresident, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges.

Some congressional Republicans say that students need to be working harder to pay for higher education, like medical school, on their own. Others say the caps put the onus back on colleges and universities to rein in rising cost of tuition. But critics of this legislation say the loan caps are only going to harm students, especially from lower-income backgrounds, and will exacerbate physician shortages.

In recent years states have tried to ease physician shortages by implementing various policy solutions. Since 2023, at least nine states have made it easier for doctors trained in other countries to get medical licenses. States have also participated in interstate licensing compacts, allowing nurses and physician assistants to travel across state lines to work, so long as they are licensed in one state within the compact.

For student loan relief, more than 20 states have enacted legislation to address student loan forgiveness, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, a group that tracks state policies. Georgia passed a measure that will expand a cancelable loan program for physicians working in rural and underserved areas. Idaho also created the Rural Nursing Loan Repayment Program, offering nurses $25,000 in forgivable loans after three years of service in a rural area.

McKenzie Richards, a health care policy fellow at the conservative think tank Cicero Institute who has been studying the pace of physician shortages, told Stateline that the national physician shortage could potentially exceed 100,000 by 2034. At the end of 2024 that projected number was closer to 64,000 physicians.

Richards said states will be looking toward more policy solutions should the student loan changes exacerbate physician shortages.

"We know what's going to be happening coming down the line in just five years, so I think policies that states can adopt to get out of this are really important to be looking at now," she said.

"The hope is that by capping [federal loans], it will encourage schools to lower tuition prices," Richards added. "Then maybe they need to be admitting more students, which would have a great downstream effect for getting more doctors through."

Other students will be in the same boat, said Lesley Turner, an associate professor of public policy at the University of Chicago and an economist.

"This is going to hit some students worse than others," Turner told Stateline. "Those [students] in more expensive programs tend to borrow more, and so for those students they will need to return to private student loans or other ways of financing their graduate education."

Many students were already questioning their capacity to go to medical school before the student loan caps, said Shannon Jimenez, dean of the Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine.

"I expect that this bill, this cap, is going to push people out of primary care and into specialties to help pay off those higher interest rate loans," Jimenez told Stateline. She added that caps will likely deter students from lower socioeconomic statuses from going into primary care – important in places like Arkansas, where she says there is a "maldistribution of physicians."

"Many schools like us try to attract those students, because they're more likely to go into primary care and serve in underserved areas. So it's going to tie our hands in a lot of ways."

Large states and more rural states will feel the gaps more

> **"I expect that this bill, this cap, is going to push people out of primary care and into specialties to help pay off those higher interest rate loans. Caps will likely deter students from lower socioeconomic statuses from going into primary care – important in places like Arkansas, where there is a 'maldistribution of physicians.'"**
>
> **SHANNON JIMENEZ**
> Dean of the Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine

deeply, said Richards, of the Cicero Institute. Louisiana, for example, is projected to be short almost 5,000 doctors from a variety of specialties by 2030, including close to 400 primary care doctors. Already more than a third of Louisiana physicians are close to retirement age – similar to the situation in neighboring Arkansas.

As for whether schools will just be able to lower tuition, Jimenez said, "it makes no sense."

"We still function in a somewhat market-driven economy and have to compete with other schools around us, so our cost is based mostly on what we have to pay our faculty, and that's not going to go down," she said. The annual cost of attendance at her school is between $80,000 and $85,000.

Bonner, the EMT, holds a political communications degree from Regent University and now is studying biomedical sciences at Old Dominion University. She already has $20,000 in loans, she said, and for the rest of college tuition, she has paid out of pocket. Since she's supporting herself, she hasn't been able to save much.

She'd planned to take the medical school entrance exam next spring, but now worries about how she'd pay for living expenses while attending. "Medical school scheduling doesn't allow for working, so you have to take out loans for living expenses," she said.

"A lot of people, I feel, would be panicked if you had worked for eight to 10 years of your life and found out that all the systems that you were banking on in a really academically challenging space are disappearing," Bonner said.

"I don't see a path forward for certain, but I'm fighting to make one."

Stateline reporter Shalina Chatlani can be reached at schatlani@stateline.org. Stateline is part of States Newsroom, a national nonprofit news organization focused on state policy. ©2025 States Newsroom. Visit at stateline.org. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

‘Relentlessly debilitating’

Amy Sussman / Getty Images / TNS

Justin Timberlake performs onstage during the 2024 iHeartRadio Music Awards at Dolby Theatre on April 1, 2024, in Hollywood, California.

The chronic symptoms of Lyme disease

By KAREN GARCIA
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — Grammy award-winning pop star Justin Timberlake, 44, recently took to Instagram to share his diagnosis of Lyme disease, a bacterial infection that he said was “relentlessly debilitating, both mentally and physically.” His statement comes on the heels of criticism from fans who felt he was under-performing during his recent world tour.

“When I first got the diagnosis I was shocked for sure,” the post stated. “But, at least I could understand why I would be onstage and in a massive amount of nerve pain or, just feeling crazy fatigue or sickness.”

Lyme disease is an infectious disease caused by borrelia burgdorferi, a bacterial species that can spread to people and animals from the bite of a deer tick – also called a black-legged tick – carrying the bacteria, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Experts say ticks that carry the bacteria live throughout most of the United States, although the incidence of Lyme disease is far less prevalent in California than it is in the American Northeast, Midwest and mid-Atlantic states. (The disease is named after the town of Lyme, Connecticut, where an outbreak was first identified in the 1970s.)

In California, western black-legged ticks are carriers of Lyme disease and are commonly found in northern coastal counties and in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountains, according to the California Department of Public Health.

Between 2013 and 2019, there were 904 new cases of Lyme disease in the state. During that time period, the average rates of Lyme disease were highest in Santa Cruz (4 cases per 100,000 people), Humboldt (about 3 cases per 100,000 people) and Sonoma counties (about 2 cases per 100,000 people).

Lyme disease often goes undiagnosed “due to the breadth and migratory nature of its symptoms – ranging from headaches and fatigue to joint pain, body aches, balance issues, memory loss, myocarditis, anxiety, insomnia, and depression,” the Bay Area Lyme Foundation, a nonprofit that studies the disease, stated in a post on X.

Most people completely recover from the disease when treated with a two- to four-week course of antibiotics. Others have prolonged symptoms of fatigue, body aches or difficulty thinking, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

How a tick-infected bite leds to Lyme disease

When a bacteria-infected tick bites a person or animal, the bacteria is released from the mouth of the tick and into the bloodstream, where it can then spread throughout the body, according to Bay Area Lyme Foundation.

If a tick becomes attached to your skin, the CDC recommends you remove it as soon as possible. Consult your healthcare provider if you show any symptoms of the disease.

Symptoms of Lyme disease

Your body’s reaction to the infection varies from person to person and symptoms show up in stages. Some people with Lyme disease don’t have symptoms in the early stages of the infection, according to the Mayo Clinic.

Common symptoms of Lyme disease are fever, rash, facial paralysis, an irregular heartbeat, and arthritis. These symptoms can happen in stages.

During the first stage, which occurs three to 30 days after a tick bite, a person can develop a circular rash around the site of the bite. The rash can become clear in the center, and resemble a target or bull’s-eye.

During this first stage, infected people can experience a fever, headache, extreme tiredness, joint stiffness, muscle aches and pains or swollen lymph nodes.

In the second stage, which occurs three to 10 weeks after a bite, symptoms can escalate. They include:

- Rashes on other parts of the body
- Neck pain or stiffness
- Muscle weakness on one or both sides of the face
- Immune-system activity in heart tissue that causes irregular heartbeats
- Pain that starts from the back and hips and spreads to the legs
- Pain, numbness or weakness in the hands or feet
- Painful swelling in tissues of the eye or eyelid
- Immune-system activity in the eye nerves that causes pain or vision loss

Symptoms in the third stage of the disease, which begins two to 12 months after a tick bite, include arthritis in large joints, particularly the knees. Pain, swelling or stiffness may last for a long time or can come and go.

People with prolonged symptoms of Lyme disease, called Post-Treatment Lyme Disease syndrome, usually get better over time without additional antibiotics, but it can take many months to feel completely well, according to the CDC.

The cause of prolonged symptoms is unknown.

Be aware of a tick’s home, how to protect yourself

Ticks are commonly found in outdoor areas with grass, shrubs, rocks, logs and fallen leaves.

You don’t have to avoid these areas, but should instead wear protective clothing to prevent a tick from latching onto your skin.

Before you go on your outdoor activity, plan to wear long-sleeve shirts and pants. With your protective clothes on, apply insect repellent to garments and exposed skin, according to the state public health department.

During your hike,check yourself and any pets for ticks that might be crawling on you. If you do see a tick, remove it right away.

When you return home from your excursion, inspect your clothes, body and scalp for any ticks. Toss the tick-free clothes in the laundry and take a shower.

If you found a tick on your clothes put clothing items in a hot dryer for 10 minutes, that will kill the insect.

The California Department of Public Health recommends you continue to check your body for any sign of ticks for three days after being outside in areas where ticks reside.

Bite back against Lyme disease

Among the tall grasses and wildflowers that sprout each spring and summer lies a stealth predator just waiting for its chance at an easy meal. Ticks may be small in stature, but their impact on bite victims is potentially significant. Preventing Lyme disease and other tickborne illnesses comes down to following some key steps.

- Learn how common Lyme disease is. Lyme disease affects an estimated 476,000 people each year in the United States alone, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s Division of Vector-Borne Diseases. Lyme disease is most common in New England, the mid-Atlantic states and the upper Midwest. Between 2009 and 2022, the Government of Canada reported 17,080 human cases of Lyme disease across Canada. However, instances of Lyme disease are likely underreported due to undiagnosed cases.
- Know which ticks carry Lyme disease. The black-legged deer tick and the Western black-legged tick carry the Lyme disease spirochete. The black-legged tick is native to the northeastern, mid-Atlantic and north-central U.S., while the western black-legged tick is found on the Pacific coast.
- Wear light-colored clothing outdoors. When traveling in areas where ticks reside, it is important to wear light-colored clothing. Long pants and tall socks, long-sleeved shirts, and hats also should be worn. It is easier to spot ticks on light-colored clothing, and covering up prevents ticks from gaining easy access to skin.
- Know where to expect ticks. John’s Hopkins Medicine says black-legged ticks live in moist and humid environments, particularly in and near wooded or grassy areas. Walking through leaves and bushes or through tall grasses can wdisturb ticks and enable them to jump onto people or pets. To avoid ticks, walk in the center of trails and avoid tall vegetation.
- Be mindful of pets. Even if you do not venture outdoors into tick-laden environments, your dog may. He or she can carry ticks into the house where they may end up on you or other family members. Prescription tick repellent products are available from veterinarians, and there are topical solutions and collars that can keep ticks away.
- Remove ticks quickly and correctly. The CDC says if a tick is removed in less than 24 hours from when it first attached, the chances of getting Lyme disease is very small. Remove a tick with fine-tipped tweezers as soon as it is noticed, being cautious to remove all mouth parts. Try not to squeeze the tick, as it can regurgitate saliva and other fluids when squeezed.
- Repel ticks when possible. Create less favorable conditions for ticks. Use a product containing DEET or permethrin on clothing to repel ticks. Some people use chemical-control agents on their properties to reduce the number of ticks in the yard. Discourage deer from the property, as they can carry many ticks, by erecting fences and removing vegetation that deer eat.

More Americans are family caregivers; states struggle to help them, report finds

By ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS
Stateline.org (TNS)

More than 63 million Americans are caregivers for a family member with complex medical needs, a 20 million increase over the past decade, according to a new report.

But state policies, workplaces and the American health system haven’t kept up with this surge in family caregiving responsibilities, said Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, a physician and the CEO of the AARP, which released the report with the National Alliance for Caregiving, a nonprofit policy and research organization.

“Nearly half of caregivers say they face major financial consequences, draining savings, falling into debt or struggling to afford basic needs like food and housing,” Minter-Jordan told reporters on a call recently.

One of the biggest reasons for the surge in family caregivers is that Americans are living longer, yet they’re not necessarily healthier. There’s a 12-year gap between the average number of years that Americans live and the number of years they’re healthy.

Dreamstime / TNS

More than 63 million Americans are caregivers for a family member with complex medical needs, a 20 million increase over the past decade, according to a new report.

The caregiving role typically involves helping a family member with daily tasks like bathing, dressing and eating. But more than half of caregivers also perform more complex medical tasks, such as managing catheters or administering injections, the report found.

A growing number of caregivers are so-called “sandwich caregivers” – parents caring for their children as well as for an adult family member, such as an aging parent. About 17 million people are sandwich caregivers, compared with 11 million a decade ago. And most caregivers are also working a job.

And while the bulk of caregiving still falls on women, 40 percent of American caregivers are men.

Some states have heeded the growing calls for action.

Earlier this year, Maine lawmakers created a state program to provide respite care, which includes services such as adult day care that give family caregivers a temporary break.

Also this year, Tennessee extended its pilot program that provides respite care for Alzheimer’s and dementia patients, and also passed a bipartisan bill that directs the state Medicaid program to develop guidelines to allow family caregivers to be paid for their work.

Last year, Nebraska passed a tax credit for family caregivers; Oklahoma passed a similar law the year before. And while the United States is one of few countries that doesn’t mandate paid family leave at the federal level, 13 states and the District of Columbia have established their own paid family leave rules.

Meanwhile, the historic cuts to Medicaid enacted as part of the GOP’s Big, Beautiful Bill Act will shift health costs to states, leaving experts worried that family caregivers could lose Medicaid-funded services they rely on.

FINANCE

Dreamstime / TNS

Kids who learn about investing early in their lives reap multiple benefits, including establishing healthy financial habits that they will use into adulthood.

7 ways to teach your kids about investing today to set them up for future success

By JAMES ROYAL, PH.D.
Bankrate.com (TNS)

The habits we learn as children often stick with us through adulthood, and so it goes with financial habits, too, according to a recent Bankrate survey. Bankrate's 2025 Financial Habits Survey revealed that Americans who had a strong financial education as children were more likely to use those habits as adults. Unfortunately, the survey also revealed that more than half of Americans (54 percent) did not receive a strong financial education as children.

"There isn't much more important than teaching children about finances," says Steve Azoury, ChFC, owner of Azoury Financial in Troy, Michigan. "When it comes to learning about finances, the schools aren't teaching it. It's left to loved ones to teach children valuable lessons on personal finances."

To set children up for financial success, it can be valuable to teach them about money, including budgeting, credit cards, bank accounts and even more advanced subjects such as investing. Here are seven ways you can teach children about finance and help them succeed.

1. Teach them to save

You need money to invest, and the way for most people to get the cash is by saving it. For many individuals, that means budgeting money, but for others it's a process of always keeping money in reserve or holding back some of what you earn. This kind of lesson can start early.

"Basic budgeting is easily configured into trips to the store with young children, utilizing the envelope plan or something similar," says Lori Gross, financial and investment advisor at Outlook Financial Center in Troy, Ohio. "The basis here is that you put aside a specific amount the child has earned through things such as chores, good grades and positive behaviors into an envelope. When you go to the store, they can spend what they have earned, but nothing more. When it's gone, it's gone."

Maintaining this kind of discipline – not overspending – is important because it teaches children to live within their means, even from a young age. They're forced to prioritize what they want instead of waiting for a parent or relative to buy it for them. The idea of "living below your means" is vital for those who want to build up a sum of money that they can invest later.

2. Open a bank account for their savings

Working with a financial institution is a valuable lesson that can help kids understand how money works.

"Teaching children about personal finances should begin early in life, and it can start with simple lessons," says Azoury. "This could be something as simple as teaching them to save a percentage of their birthday or holiday cash in a high-yield savings account and then having them watch that savings grow over time."

Setting up a custodial account for a child at a bank can be an easy step, and many banks offer no-cost accounts for children. As part of the process, it's an opportune time to teach children the value of interest: Turn to one of the best high-yield savings accounts and show them why this kind of account is more valuable. Then, check in each month on the interest that's been earned.

3. Encourage them to start a small business

Building a small business can help children understand how money works, too, moving closer to investing. Of course, it's a better fit for older kids who can handle some responsibility.

Azoury suggests having a child "invest their savings into a product in which they can start a small business and make more money. This could include having them invest in the purchase of a small lawnmower, then work to build their client list and make money cutting grass."

Even at a small scale, this kind of business connects the idea of work with money and savings. It also allows a child to help make decisions about the business and think about how investing in the business is helping them to make more money.

4. Give stock as a gift

Taking that first step into actually owning a stock or other investment can be managed by giving a share of stock as a gift. You can go about this in a few ways, from simply giving a stock you already own to opening a custodial account for the child and then buying some shares there. One great way to spark a child's interest is to buy shares in a company that they like or use frequently, helping them connect the (abstract) investment with the concrete business reality.

It can be easy to give the gift of stock and a variety of companies allow you to do so, but you can work with traditional brokers, too.

5. Help them learn about stocks through games

Before you put any serious money on the line, using games could be a great way to teach your child about investing. Classic board games such as Acquire, Modern Art and even Monopoly can teach children how money and investing work in a simplified but still useful way.

If you want to step up to digital experience, you can use stock market simulators and virtual games to teach how investing works more concretely. These simulators give you a bankroll and let you buy and sell stocks, tracking your progress along the way. Children can quickly make the connection that they need to pick the right investments to succeed, and the games help provide exposure to the process of buying and selling investments, making it more familiar.

6. Start an investing account

With a very little bit of money and motivation, you can start a custodial investment account for your child. A child can track the cash in the account and the value of the investments, watch dividend payments come in and even make basic investing decisions with your supervision. Becoming familiar with a brokerage account can make it all feel familiar and normal – exactly what you want.

The best brokerage accounts don't charge an annual fee and have no minimum account size, so it's easy to get started. Plus, if you work with one of the best brokers for fractional shares, you can buy even partial shares of stock, so you don't need enough money for a full share. That means you can literally start with just a few dollars and begin investing.

7. Research a stock or ETF with them

Beyond owning stock and opening an investment account, you can teach your child how to conduct some basic research on a stock, including looking up its stock chart, reading some news about the company and even looking at some basic valuation metrics. While this kind of work is better-suited to older children, it could even be applied in simpler ways for younger ones.

It could also be an opportune moment to explain exchange-traded funds (ETFs), which hold many stocks and may deliver strong returns over time, too. Plus, ETFs are a great way for beginners to invest without having to do all the heavy-duty research as they would for a stock.

Top reasons to teach your kids about investing while they're children

Most people don't think much about investing for their children, but there are plenty of reasons why it makes sense to get started early. Aside from getting a jump start on building wealth, there are also many benefits associated with exposure to financial concepts. Bankrate's 2025 Financial Habits Survey found that Americans who grew up with a strong financial education were more likely to have implemented healthy financial habits and to have successfully negotiated their salaries as adults.

Here are some other top reasons to get your children started with investing.

Develop good saving habits

Habits get ingrained early, so teaching kids about saving and investing while they're still young can have major benefits for them down the road.

Help them understand that money is earned through work and is needed for necessities such as food and housing. If there's something they want, consider teaching them about the importance of saving by giving them an allowance that forces them to save up for the item over time.

Learn how to take risks

Children can also learn lessons from the risk involved with investing. Some investments have very low risk but offer returns that are also quite low. Other options, such as stocks, come with higher risk but also have the potential for strong returns. One of the best ways to learn about these differences is by having real money on the line and seeing how your investments perform and how you react to the gains or losses. Kids might get a sense of their risk tolerance, which can help guide them throughout their investing lives.

Compounding returns

One of the biggest benefits of getting kids started with investing is the opportunity to earn compound returns over a very long time horizon. For example, if a child is able to save up $1,000 and invest it when they're 10 years old, it would be worth about $189,000 when they're 65 years old or nearly $790,000 when they're 80 years old, assuming 10 percent annualized returns, about the average return on the S&P 500 index over time. Those numbers should get the attention of even the most rambunctious child.

More time to recover from losses

Another benefit of investing early is that kids have that much more time to recover from inevitable losses. Depending on the goal they're investing for, kids will potentially have many decades to invest, giving them plenty of time to gain back any short-term losses that may come due to market selloffs or economic difficulties. Having a long-term mindset is an important part of being a good investor and kids are uniquely positioned to understand this concept. No one's time horizon is longer than a child's.

Reach financial security sooner

Getting kids started with investing may also increase the chances that they reach financial security sooner than they would if they started later in life. Compound interest grows over time, so if you have a 10- or 20-year head start on most people, it's reasonable to think that you'll get to the finish line faster too. Someone who is an aggressive saver as a child and continues to be one early on in their career will likely be in a strong financial position when it comes time to retire and may even be in a spot to retire early.

FAQs about investing for children

■ How old do you have to be to invest in stocks?

Typically, you need to be 18 years old to open a brokerage account, though some brokers have started offering accounts to teens. Custodial accounts can be opened on your behalf prior to age 18, but an adult will have ownership over the account until you're an adult.

■ How can you buy stocks as a gift?

Stocks can be purchased as a gift and then transferred to the recipient's account through a broker. You can also purchase stocks on behalf of a child through a UGMA Trust account.

■ What is the best way to invest for a child?

The best way to invest for a child will depend on your unique circumstances and what your goal is. A custodial Roth IRA can be a great way to kick-start their retirement savings if they qualify for an account, or a custodial trust account can help you get them started with investing until they reach adult age.

Bottom line

"Teaching children financial responsibility begins at home, and the earlier, the better," says Gross.

Providing your child a financial education can begin in small ways and advance as the child grows. Give them a little responsibility so that they can see how money works and then slowly increase the scope of the lessons to more complex topics as their mastery and knowledge grow.

Bankrate's Brian Baker contributed.
Visit Bankrate online at bankrate.com.

FOOD

These 6 recipes will help you host a stellar summer cookout

By GRETCHEN MCKAY
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (TNS)

Good luck to August vacationers who still need to find a bathing suit or plastic bucket to keep the kids happy at the beach. Stores have already switched into back-to-school mode, making summer accoutrements nearly impossible to find.

All those aisles filled with pencils, backpacks and other school supplies also serve as a reminder: If you're going to celebrate summer with a cookout or barbecue, time is wasting.

We get it. It's been pretty hot and humid in Pittsburgh this summer, and we've also had more than our share of crazy rainstorms. Mosquitoes also seem to be particularly abundant this year. All these conspire to create iffy weather for planning a gathering outdoors.

Time also has a funny way of getting away from you. June all too quickly melted into July, and I have this sinking feeling that, before I know it, I'll be grabbing a rake instead of pushing a lawnmower to get my yard in shape.

The good news is that we still have August to plan a memorable outdoor gathering with friends, family and neighbors.

To make it a little easier for the host, we've done much of your homework for you by compiling a menu of crowd-pleasing recipes that can largely be made a day or two ahead of the event with (mostly) affordable, easy-to-find seasonal ingredients.

That not only lessens kitchen work on the day of the cookout or barbecue (where meats are cooked low and slow on a grill or in a smoker), but also allows for those precious minutes we often forget we need for decorating, setting up tables, dusting off the patio and preparing a batch of punch cocktails to greet guests upon their arrival.

Depending on the dish, preparing food ahead of time can also improve its flavor because the ingredients have time to meld.

Locally grown corn is soon to be in peak season, so we kick things off with a cheesy elote dip served with tortilla chips. We also suggest two vegetarian dishes for guests who don't eat meat: a vibrant potato salad that's dressed in a tangy, herby chimichurri sauce instead of mayonnaise, and an easy pasta salad that tastes exactly like a Caesar salad.

No cookout is complete without hot dogs (all beef instead of the chicken franks I grew up with, please!). To make them extra irresistible, they're topped with a homemade cucumber relish that takes only about a half-hour to chop, stir together and cook on the stove.

We also highly recommend two pork dishes made with meat from Blackberry Meadows Farms – pulled pork cooked in a crockpot that requires almost no effort other than measuring out ingredients, and oven-to-grill baby back ribs.

Ribs can be intimidating for some home cooks because 1) they're expensive, and 2) the lean meat is easy to dry out if not properly cooked. The ribs I served at a recent gathering are hard to screw up because most of the cooking takes place low and slow in the oven with the ribs wrapped in foil. They get only a short dance on the grill while being sauced, limiting burning.

And for a sweet ending as the sun is setting and the kids start catching lightning bugs? Key lime is a classic, refreshing taste of summer. If you opt for our bar dessert that's more easily portioned and shareable than pie, nothing could be easier – especially if you use whipped cream out of a can instead of homemade. (Give yourself a break.)

Our scratch chocolate ice cream sandwiches take a little more time and skill if you're not a seasoned baker, but the cookies can be made a few days in advance and then filled the morning of with your favorite ice cream. They're so good on a hot summer evening, you'll want to double or maybe even triple the recipe.

Don't worry if they're not perfect – no one says no to an ice cream sandwich, especially when they're homemade.

Some food safety notes for outdoor parties in summer heat: Remember to keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Perishable foods should never be in the "danger zone" of 40-140 degrees for more than two hours; any longer, and bacteria begin to multiply. You also want to prevent cross-contamination by washing plates and serving utensils that previously held or touched raw meat, poultry or seafood before reusing.

If you're cooking on the grill, have an instant-read thermometer to check the meat's internal temperature. Beef and pork should be at least 160 degrees while poultry is properly cooked at 165 degrees. Even though hot dogs are fully cooked, they should be warmed to at least 150 degrees.

Finally, if you limit the number of times a cooler holding beverages is open, they'll stay cold longer.

Life, and summer, is short. Enjoy!

Elote Dip
Makes 3 cups

Elote, or Mexican street corn, is often made right on the cob, which can be an issue if you're serving a crowd. Instead, turn it into a dip that can be served with chips or spooned onto hot dogs or burgers.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 cups whole kernel corn, from about 4 ears
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and finely chopped
- 1/4 cup finely chopped red onion or 2 green onions, chopped
- 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese
- 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh cilantro
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 teaspoon chili powder, or to taste
- Juice of 1 lime
- Kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper

Add oil to a large cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add corn and cook for about 10 minutes, tossing occasionally, until the kernels are golden and the sugar has caramelized.

Add garlic and sauté for an additional 1-2 minutes, until fragrant.

Remove pan from heat. Add corn to a large serving bowl.

Add jalapeño, onion, Parmesan cheese, cilantro, mayonnaise, chili powder and lime juice and give everything a good stir; it should be well combined. Season to taste with salt and pepper and more lime juice or chili powder if it's not tangy/spicy enough.

Serve with tortilla chips.

– Gretchen McKay/Post-Gazette

Chimichurri Potato Salad
Serves 8-12

Nothing goes with ribs better than potato salad, but if you make it with mayonnaise, you have to be careful about how long it sits out. This version, which gets its herbal flavor from a chimichurri mix, cooks up almost as rich and creamy.

In the craziness of preparing for a large party, I couldn't find any red vinegar in my pantry (it was in the fridge – go figure!), so I substituted white wine vinegar. It still turned out great.

- 4 pound Yukon Gold potatoes, unpeeled and cut into bite-sized chunks
- 1 1/2 teaspoons table salt, plus more for cooking potatoes
- 1 1/2 cups fresh parsley leaves
- 1 cup fresh cilantro leaves
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 3/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 cup red wine vinegar
- 3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

Place potatoes and 2 tablespoons salt in a large pot and add enough water to cover. Bring to a boil over high heat.

Reduce heat to medium and simmer, stirring occasionally until potatoes are tender but not breaking down, about 10 minutes. Drain in a colander and let cool for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, pulse parsley, cilantro, garlic, oregano, pepper flakes and salt in a food processor until finely chopped.

Add vinegar and pulse to combine. Transfer herb mixture to a large bowl and whisk in oil until combined.

Add potatoes to bowl with herb mixture. Gently fold in potatoes until evenly coated. Serve at room temperature.

– Cook's Country

Caesar Pasta Salad
Serves 6

There are bound to be a few vegetarians at your cookout. This pasta salad has all the flavor of a Caesar salad, but it has a little more heft because it also includes pasta.

I made the pasta and dressing the day before my party, and added the lettuce just before serving to keep it crunchy.

- 12 ounces rotini or fusilli
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan, plus more for serving
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Dash of Worcestershire sauce
- 1 clove garlic, finely minced
- 1 teaspoon anchovy paste, optional
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 romaine hearts, finely chopped or sliced
- 1/2 cup homemade croutons

Bring pot of salted water to a boil on high. Add pasta and cook according to package directions until al dente. Drain and rinse with cold water to cool. Drain again.

While pasta is cooking, whisk together mayonnaise, Parmesan, lemon juice, mustard, garlic and anchovy paste, if using. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Add romaine hearts and pasta to a large bowl, and add the dressing. Stir to coat well.

Top with croutons and a little more grated Parmesan, and serve.

– Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

Oven-to-Grill Baby Back Ribs
Serves 6-8

These succulent, fall-off-the-bone tender ribs were by far the most popular dish at a recent cookout. The key was using quality meat and a spicy (but not too spicy) seasoning mix. The ribs came from Blackberry Meadows Farm in Fawn, a pioneer of community farming in Allegheny County.

FOR SPICE RUB:

- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 1/2 tablespoons smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 teaspoons onion powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon ground mustard
- 1 tablespoon chili powder

FOR RIBS:

- 2 racks baby back ribs
- 1/2 cup homemade or store-bought barbecue sauce, plus more for serving

Prepare spice rub: In a medium bowl, whisk together sugars and spices until well blended.

Preheat oven to 275 degrees, with rack in the middle position.

Remove the membrane that coats the underside of each rack of rib using a butter knife and a paper towel. (My ribs came with them already removed.)

Use about half of the spice mix to coat the ribs evenly on both sides. Allow the ribs to rest for 10-15 minutes to absorb the rub and penetrate the meat, then use the remaining rub to once again coat the racks.

Line a baking sheet with heavy-duty aluminum foil. (I used a disposable aluminum pan.)

Place ribs in the prepared pan and cover tightly with foil. Bake until ribs are tender, about 2-2 1/2 hours.

Finish ribs by placing on a preheated grill and grilling for about 10 minutes, brushing occasionally with the barbecue sauce. Be careful not to overcook; you just want to heat them through and add some char.

Let ribs cool for about 10 minutes, then slice and serve.

– Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

Pulled Pork Sandwiches
Serves 8

I don't have a smoker so have to rely on my slow cooker to make pulled pork. You won't get the same, smoky flavor or crispy bark as pork made in a smoker, but it's just as juicy and tender, It's also a lot more convenient when cooking for a crowd because you can just add everything to the pot and go.

FOR PORK:

- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3/4 cup ketchup
- 3 tablespoons tomato paste
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon mustard powder
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 (3- to 4-pound) pork shoulder, trimmed of excess fat
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Soft buns, for serving
- Pickles, for serving

FOR COLESLAW:

- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tablespoon maple syrup
- 1/4 teaspoon celery seeds
- Generous pinch of sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 3 cups coleslaw mix (cabbage and shredded carrots)

Prepare sauce: Combine onion, ketchup, tomato paste, apple cider vinegar and spices in the bowl of a slow cooker.

Season pork shoulder all over with salt and pepper, add to slow cooker and cover with ketchup mixture. Cover and cook until very tender on high for 5-6 hours or on low for 8-10 hours. (The meat should fall apart easily with a fork.)

While pork is cooking, make coleslaw. In a bowl, whisk together mayonaise, apple cider vinegar, mustard, maple syrup, celery seeds, salt and several grinds of fresh pepper. Add cabbage mix and mix well to combine.

Remove pork from slow cooker and transfer to bowl. Shred with two forks and toss with juices from the slow cooker. Serve on buns topped with coleslaw and pickles.

– Gretchen McKay, Post Gazette

Key Lime Bars

Nothing says summer better than a slice of Key lime pie. These bars are a little easier to portion for a crowd because they can be cut into squares, rectangles or triangles. I used canned whipped cream for convenience but if you have the time, homemade would also be excellent.

- 9 graham crackers, ground to fine crumbs in a food processor (1 cup plus 2 1/2 tablespoons)
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 3 large egg yolks
- 1 1/2 teaspoons finely grated lime zest (about 2 limes)
- 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
- 2/3 cup fresh or bottled Key lime juice (about 20 Key limes)
- Whipped cream topping
- 2 regular or Key limes, thinly sliced into half-moons, for garnish

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Stir together crumbs, sugar and butter in a small bowl.

Press evenly onto bottom of an 8-inch square glass or ceramic pan. Bake until dry and golden brown, about 10 minutes. Let cool in pan on a wire rack. Leave oven on.

Place egg yolks and zest in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment. Beat on high speed until mixture is very thick, about 5 minutes.

On medium speed, pour in condensed milk in a steady stream, scraping down sides of bowl. Beat on high speed until thick, about 3 minutes.

On low speed, add lime juice; mix until just combined.

Pour filling over crust; spread evenly. Bake until just set, about 10 minutes.

Let cool completely on a wire rack. Chill at least 4 hours or overnight.

Cut dessert into small squares or rectangles. Garnish each with a squirt of whipped cream topping and a slice of lime.

– Gretchen McKay, Post-Gazette

ENTERTAINMENT

Touchdown

JID emerges as MVP of Atlanta rap on new album

By DEASIA PAIGE
The Atlanta Journal-Constitution (TNS)

As a feature artist, JID brings the fire and fury. The Atlanta rapper's ravenous spirit improves any track – often sounding too gargantuan for a guest act while not overpowering the main artist.

With Doja Cat, his singing voice effortlessly matched the pop star's witty banter on 2021's "Options." With rock band Imagine Dragons, his ghoulish flows helped create the 2022 Billboard hit "Enemy." With Eminem, he aced the challenge of going toe-to-toe with rap's most formidable rhymer on 2024's "Fuel." And with fellow Atlanta rapper Offset, on the June-released "Bodies," his lethal lyricism makes a case for best rap verse of 2025.

JID's approach to his own music is just as bloodthirsty. Bar for bar. Hook for hook. For a decade, that insatiable drive zoomed him into a star who can compete with veterans and contemporaries alike.

With his fourth studio album, "God Does Like Ugly," which came out Friday, JID underscores another reality: His only competition is himself. More important, his competitive fervor is deeply inspired by his penchant for collaboration and an unyielding love for his hometown.

JID is great partly because the city that raised him breeds greatness. Partly because he believes in the greatness of others. And mostly because he believes his own greatness.

"I love this s---. Like, I love making music. It's nothing else I'd really do."

First down: Destin vs. JID

Surprisingly, in person, the 34-year-old is one of few words.

The hefty armor he wields with lyrics belies the charming energy of the JID who's soft-spoken and undeniably humble. The first Monday in July found JID at the legendary Walter's Clothing store in downtown Atlanta doing a Nike photo shoot for the then-upcoming MLB All-Star Week. Earlier that morning, he dropped "32 (Freestyle)" on YouTube, featuring his high school football highlight reel. The day before, he returned home from Paris Fashion Week. Four days later, he would release "GDLU (Preluxe)," an EP teasing his upcoming album.

JID takes the busy all in stride.

"You just got to put the work in," he said, as if he's giving himself a personal pep talk. "Hard work beats talent, and talent don't work hard. Just work. Don't worry about nothing else. Put your head down. That's the whole album, foreal."

For the rapper, those words have become his personal motto.

Born Destin Route in East Atlanta, JID is the youngest of seven children. His quiet personality partly stems from being about five years younger than the second-youngest sibling. His household had "a lot of stuff going on," he said.

"Kids everywhere," JID said about his upbringing. "All of my sisters had babies out of wedlock. One of my brothers was in jail. It was a blended family. We all lived under one roof at one time period. So it was madness. But I've always kind of been reserved by just watching everybody."

JID's stage name (pronounced "jid" or "J-I-D") is a childhood nickname given to him by his grandma because of his "jittery" mood.

As a child, he briefly played drums at church (he attended several). But sports was his first love. He was a football cornerback at Stephenson High School in Stone Mountain. JID's skills were so good he landed a full-ride athletic scholarship to Hampton University in Virginia. However, he was kicked out for reasons he doesn't wish to disclose.

In a 2017 interview with New York's Hot 97, though, he shared, "I was being a rock star. It was about books and drugs and stuff. Just life."

JID shifted his focus to music, with support from his college roommates and future collaborators, Atlanta rap duo Earthgang. He signed to J. Cole's Dreamville imprint in 2017 and released his debut album " The Never Story " that same year.

Halftime show

A few months before the release of his 2018 sophomore album "DiCaprio 2," JID was named on XXL magazine's highly coveted Freshman list of rising rappers to watch.

In 2022, he released his deeply personal third album (and his highest-charting LP to date), " The Forever Story," an autobiographical project tightly laced to Atlanta history by JID's poetic inferno.

He thought "The Forever Story" would push him into the stratosphere of superstardom. Online, he joked that the album's failure to deliver the Grammys and other accolades he wanted sent him into a dark place "for about 20 minutes." JID clarified that he remains unfazed by it, but his laughter sounds slightly forced because there's a subtle sense of care even in constantly saying you don't.

"I just never had that moment of, 'Oh we see you,'" he admits.

Then in 2023, more than a year after the album's release, the track "Surround Sound " (featuring fellow Zone 6-bred artists 21 Savage and Baby Tate) went viral on TikTok. Users taped their phones to ceilings to record themselves dancing along to JID's opening verse.

And Kacey Musgraves, on her 2024 album "Deeper Well," sampled "Kody Blu 31" – a "Forever Story" deep cut about grief and resilience in which JID's singing voice shines while adopting a tone similar to a Negro spiritual.

Mainstream attention aside, JID always received the love in Atlanta. In the city, he is regarded as a top lyricist – the rightful torchbearer for the lineage of dizzying rap patterns and sterling flows. Like André 3000 before him. (Speaking of the rap legend, JID said Outkast entering the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame is the "best thing in the world. I hope they hit me up for a tribute. I know every single one of their words.")

Swavay, an Atlanta rapper from Kirkwood and Cobb County, said JID occupies a "big space" in the city's hip-hop scene. He toured with JID on his 2023 joint tour with hip-hop soul bard Smino. Swavay described the experience as watching "a perfectionist go to work every single day."

Today, the pair are close friends who talk nearly every day. Swavay said he constantly reminds JID of how much he means to the present and future of Atlanta's rap landscape.

"I tell him, like, bro, I don't even care about how much pressure this puts on you. I'm letting you know that you are in this position, and you're here for a reason, so you gotta rise up to it"

Enter "God Does Like Ugly" – a vengeance-fueled, brash declaration of JID's rap prowess that has no qualms about perception and reception.

It's game time. And JID is ready to eat.

Touchdown: JID vs. everybody

The album title is yet another name he got from his late grandma, who put a twist on the saying, "God doesn't like ugly." JID said the title doesn't have any deep meaning to him, but the impetus to create it emerged from the chip-on-his-shoulder he faced after "The Forever Story."

Some of the music was made as early as 2018, which precedes his previous album. Across 15 tracks, JID goes full throttle with a pristine potency capable of decimating any of his peers. On "God Does Like Ugly," the rapper is clearly in a league of his own.

"One man's trash is another's treasure," he said.

"K-Word," a track featuring Atlanta crunk legend Pastor Troy, is a dark and twisted ode to the essence of karma. For most of the song, JID employs a gravelly tone that nearly sounds unrecognizable. It's part terrorizing and warm, like the vindication you'd get after hearing about the fate of someone who severely wronged you.

On "G'z" his run-on lines of retribution and revenge is JID's storytelling at its best. He oscillates between different scenes (like returning from an event in downtown Atlanta only to see his car broken into) while contemplating the meaning of "gangster" and its application to young Black men.

Standout track "Glory," backed by a choral beat and tambourines, sounds like a sermon JID would preach to a congregation filled with his haters.

Atlanta-born rapper JID poses for a photo at Walter's Clothing Store on July 1 in Atlanta. JID, a notable Atlanta rapper, is gearing to release his highly-anticipated fourth studio album on Aug. 8.
Hyosub Shin / The Atlanta Journal-Constitution / TNS

Odds against me?/ B---, I'm against the odds / trying to get even / see the evil in my eyes / Vengeance is the Lord's, so Imma leave it up to God / But if he don't move forward, then Imma get me mine," JID raps in the second verse.

The song ends with a snippet of an actual sermon by the Rev. John C. Welch of Sixth Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Pittsburgh. Welch is the father of JID's go-to producer Christo.

"We already kind of pay attention to little nuances within a song," said Christo, who executive produced "God Does Like Ugly." "But then, how do we go even deeper? ... The job for me was still to find something that would fit within the context. Not just insert holy quote or holy audio."

Christo said his approach to the album, compared to previous offerings, was being more attentive to the details and making songs feel like their own moments. It's a practice that aligns well with JID's "obsessive" work ethic, Christo added.

"He will work day and night – any time of day – trying to piece things together. He writes so much, and he's really incessant on saying something profound."

For JID's creative process, having adequate space to himself is imperative. He typically records and writes music on a three-day regimen, creating a hook and a verse per day. Sometimes, he'll find words to match a beat. Sometimes, he sings it. Sometimes, he hums the melody.

Anything to "find that magic," he said. "I do this when I don't feel like doing it."

JID is always on the hunt for the best in music, making a point to listen to new releases every Friday because, "I gotta see what's going on with my co-workers."

That dedication translates into a prodigious output.

"This (album) is how I'm seeing the world. It's my perspective. And maybe y'all grab something from it. Maybe you don't. But this is literally just my baby, and it's like a part one."

So there's going to be a part two?

"Yeah, it's gonna be 'God Doesn't Like Ugly,'" he said. "I'm doing a lot of music. I'm just gonna put it all out or else my hard drive is just wasted."

As for the collab album with Metro Boomin that was teased a few years ago: "It'll be that one (the part two), if it all works out," he said. "I got a lot of music done. It's just about timing and aligning with artists."

In overtime

Other featured artists on "God Does Like Ugly" are Clipse, Don Toliver, Mereba, Westside Gunn, Jessie Reyez, Ty Dolla $ign and Vince Staples.

But the album shines brightest when he's paired with Atlanta artists. Ciara and Earthgang are on "Sk8," a track destined for grooves at Cascade skating rink. The growls of rising Atlanta rapper Baby Kia encapsulate "On McAfee," a track made in 2019. Lead single "WRK" includes vocals from the College Park-raised Marco Plus.

"I'm a groupie for my city," JID said.

Breakout star Anycia, from Atlanta's southside, knows that very well. She's featured on "Sun," a song on "God Does Like Ugly" that dropped on Monday. Last year, the pair teased the track at Dreamville Festival in North Carolina. Anycia's effortless, cocky bars seamlessly mesh with JID's artistic cachet throughout the song.

But Anycia shared she was initially nervous to collaborate with JID because he's a "lyrical miracle." She warmly recalled how comfortable JID made her feel in the studio.

"I rap about how to stomp men in the face, smoking, being cute, things like that," she said. "He raps about real things, so I was like, what are we gonna do? ... He didn't coach me through it. He just told me to do me, and that's what I did."

"God Does Like Ugly" concludes with "For Keeps," which is perhaps the most introspective track. On a dreamy track that sounds like something you'd listen to on your headphones while going for a walk on a sunny day, JID reflects on his past, present and future – embracing gratitude for all eras of his career. The end of the song features a surprise.

"Daddy got the best bars in the world?," JID asks

"Yes," a voice, seemingly a toddler's, exclaims.

JID confirms he has a child – his first – although that's all he'll divulge. He wants to keep that part of his life private.

He's still adjusting to life as a dad, as fatherhood is teaching him patience. But with every new challenge, JID is prepared to tackle it with proficiency, like the perfectionist he is.

And, with "God Does Like Ugly," he makes a winning score.

"('God Does Like Ugly') is like a go ball," he said. "In football, the go ball is when the quarterback drops wider on the outside and throws it as deep as he can and sees what happens. Hail Mary type s---. But it's not like all is lost if you drop it. It's just, I'm about to go and make a play. This is me making a play."

Photos by Juhan Noh / Prime / TNS

Daniel Dae Kim stars in the South Korea-set Prime Video thriller "Butterfly."

SERIES REVIEW

South Korea-set *'Butterfly'* packages family melodrama as an action-packed thriller

By ROBERT LLOYD
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Thrillers, thrillers, thrillers, so many thrillers. Every third show I review seems to be one, and even if that math is not perfectly correct, the seeming is real enough. Sometimes they are full of interesting characters and ideas, sometimes full of posturing stereotypes with nothing to say, sometimes mostly smoke and noise, and often just take you where you've been before – it's only how they're dressed that sets them apart.

What most obviously sets "Butterfly," premiering Wednesday on Prime Video, is that it takes place in South Korea, with Korean and Korean American heroes and villains. Adapted by Ken Woodruff and Steph Cha from a graphic novel by Arash Amel and Marguerite Bennett (in which the characters are not Korean, and the setting not Korea) it stars Daniel Dae Kim as former CIA agent David Jung – believed dead, but not dead.

Information is developed and doled out across its six episodes, but notwithstanding the twists and turns, it's a straightforward scenario. David, who co-founded a private sector security business after leaving the agency, disappeared from view nine years earlier; thought to have been killed in the course of an operation, he's been hiding in South Korea in plain sight with a second wife (Kim Tae-hee). David's late first wife was the mother of his daughter, Rebecca (Reina Hardesty), 23; in his absence she was raised by and is now working as a top-flight assassin for Juno (Piper Perabo), David's former partner in Caddis Private Intelligence – which for the convenience of the production has opened a sparkly new headquarters in Seoul.

Before his apparent demise, David and Juno had been heading down separate paths regarding their company – he more high-minded, she more mercenary. "The only enemy I have is peace," she'll say, managing to maintain an air of well-connected respectability while doing the dirty work. Juno also has a son, Oliver (Louis Landau), whom she had packed off as a youngster to live with his father in England, where he acquired an accent and the patina of one of Bertie Wooster's less assertive friends. Now he's working as an aide to his mother in a less than essential capacity and seeking her approval.

Although the spy stuff accounts for the running and shooting, the car chases (which Rebecca seems to especially enjoy), the martial arts dust-ups and near constant threat of death, it's also beside the point. "Butterfly" is a sort of an action soap, an extended family melodrama with guns. The political story, should you care to track it – not that you really need to – matters less than the personal one, set in motion by David's reappearance and his desire to reconnect with and save Rebecca, which puts him into conflict with Juno. (And with Rebecca, who is not convinced she needs saving.)

She is naturally angry with him for leaving her, but before long she is calling him "Dad" and engaging in spiky banter. There will be tears – and punches.

As in less explicitly violent variations on the theme, children resent their parents' choices, and parents respond that everything they've done, good or ill, is to keep the children safe. (Rebecca is being asked to choose between her father and her surrogate mother as if they were divorcing spouses.) Surely no other spy drama has contained so many declarations of love, pleas for love, expressions of guilt or apologies.

For all its emotionality, the dialogue can be a little flat, a little stiff, a little cornball. (David: "You hurt my family and I will destroy everything you care about." Juno: "While you played dead, I built an empire. You can't touch me.") The tonal transitions, from creepy to weepy and back again, might cause you some aesthetic whiplash. Gun (Kim Ji-hoon), a fine-featured, long-haired killer engaged by Juno and who will play for Team Evil against Team Less Evil in the inevitable climactic showdown, is the sort of part you will see even more of once AI kills all the screenwriters. Minor roles – assorted friends, relatives and workers – tend to be more lifelike for not having to carry the weight of the melodrama and light up the proceedings here and there.

The action is well-staged and executed, and the series as a whole looks fantastic; not one of the show's many locations, whether upscale, downscale, urban, rural or industrial, is wasted, but is captured with a crispness that frames the drama wonderfully. Apart from the fussing and fighting, there's an appealing travel element to the series. Local cuisine – preparing it, eating it, admiring it – plays a part as an expression of love and love of country. (We know that Juno is a broken person by the meagerness of her lunch.) "Butterfly" may be the place you learn about budae-jjigae, or "Army base stew."

Rebecca (Reina Hardesty) discovers that her father David (Daniel Dae Kim) is alive, and he tries to reconnect with her.

The show flies on toward an ending that keeps ending and finally isn't an ending at all. (You will sense it … not coming, before it doesn't come.) Obviously this is to get you back for a second season, and while I understand that, I will say that this particular non-ending felt a little mean to me, a little unfair. Life isn't fair, you may say, but television has the opportunity to be better than that.

Still, I suppose I'll check in when "Butterfly" comes back – and between the thriller effect and America's love affair with Korean culture, I expect it will – just to find out what's at the bottom of that cliffhanger and how angry I should actually be about it. The series, which is no worse and somewhat better than "perfectly fine," certainly has its points, Kim and Hardesty not the least among them. Would I prefer to watch them in an episodic procedural as father-daughter investigators solving crimes from week to week, or doing spy stuff, or cooking together? Yes, I would like that very much.

MOVIE REVIEW

Unoriginal *'Nobody 2'* forgets what worked in the original

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Just about anyone can be an action hero when production company 87North – the team behind the "John Wick" franchise – is behind the camera. They proved that in 2021 when they made comedian and "Better Call Saul" star Bob Odenkirk a surprise badass in the hyper-violent dadsploitation flick "Nobody."

Odenkirk played Hutch, a suburban dad and corporate stooge with a surprising past, who is unable to keep a lid on his instincts, like a kettle boiling over, when his family is threatened. In the sequel, "Nobody 2," Hutch has found his groove, and once again he's fallen into a routine of quotidian drudgery, delivering brutality day in and day out, in an attempt to pay off his debt – not that the script by Derek Kolstad and Aaron Rabin recaps anything from the first film. But all you need to know is that Hutch is a dad, his job is violence, and he needs a break.

Desperate to save his marriage and family, Hutch decides to take his wife, Becca (Connie Nielsen), and kids Sammy (Paisley Cadorath) and Brady (Gage Munroe), as well as his wacky former FBI agent dad (Christopher Lloyd), on a summer break trip to one of his beloved childhood haunts: Plummerville Tiki Rush, a ramshackle water park somewhere in the Upper Midwest. He's trying to get away from it all, but as his handler The Butcher (Colin Salmon) reminds him, "Wherever you go, there you are."

Allen Fraser / Universal Pictures / TNS

Bob Odenkirk as Hutch Mansell in "Nobody 2," directed by Timo Tjahjanto.

And there Hutch goes. Try as he might to take a break from himself, he can't escape his true nature when a scuffle breaks out at an arcade and a security guard swats Sammy. The resulting brawl, set to the Offspring's "Come Out and Play," is one of the best moments of "Nobody 2" – funny, colorful, innovative. Hutch's greatest strength is his MacGyver-like ability to use every tool and random object around him in service of violence, and he plays Whack-a-Mole with the guard's head.

Much like that other Kolstad-scripted character, John Wick, Hutch is a reluctant warrior, desperate to avoid using his skills, but seemingly unable to stop, whether by obligation or training. But where Wick is brooding and operatic, "Nobody" is cheeky and irreverent, because 87North shapes their action franchises to the star, not the other way around. "Nobody 2" maintains that sense of humor, now with Timo Tjahjanto taking over directing duties from Ilya Naishuller.

> **'Nobody 2'**
>
> ★★
>
> **MPA rating:** R (for strong bloody violence and language throughout)
>
> **Running time:** 1:29
>
> **How to watch:** In theaters

But 87North also has a house style now, both aesthetically and thematically, and both "Nobody 2" and Tjahjanto fall prey to that formula. There are a few great action sequences that utilize Hutch's inventive thinking and emphasize the incongruity of his skills. The camera will follow the impact of a smash, the swing of a punch, and the violence is satisfyingly crunchy as usual. But the script itself feels dashed off like an afterthought, reverse-engineered around a few key set pieces in the amusement park.

What works about these movies is Odenkirk, his pained expression as he resorts to inflicting pain and destruction, his blackout rage mode when protecting his family. The first antagonist they introduce, a bootlegger named Henry (John Ortiz), who is also an overprotective dad, matches that energy perfectly.

So why, then, do Kolstad and Rabin jettison that villain who fits the rural setting for a slick, glamorous gangster that is Sharon Stone in a three-piece suit? As a psychopathic mob boss with a French bulldog puppy and 87North regular Daniel Bernhardt as her right-hand man, Stone is certainly having fun, but her character, Lendani, feels wildly out of place.

"Nobody 2," which plays on the juxtaposition of the suburban and the super-violent, works when it's Hutch facing off with the redneck good ol' boys on a duck boat, not when he's going through the motions with an elite villain who feels like she's "from the world of John Wick." It's like their wires got crossed in the writing, and the Lendani plot feels forced, sludgy and totally unnecessary.

However, everyone seems to be having a good time, from Stone to Ortiz to Colin Hanks as a mean sheriff with a bad haircut, and especially RZA as Hutch's brother Harry, in full ninja nerd mode. At 89 minutes, with a few pops of amusement and levity, there are worse ways to spend an August afternoon.

Patrick Brown / FX / TNS

Moe Bar-El, left, as Rashidi and Alex Lawther as Hermit during Season 1 of FX's "Alien: Earth."

Developing 'Alien: Earth' was all about building suspense

By YVONNE VILLARREAL
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Here's what one might expect from a series rooted in the "Alien" universe: dimly lit spaceship corridors, sleeping pods, computer screens, something slithering in the shadows and, of course, lots and lots of blood.

Here's what you don't expect: lore from "Peter Pan."

But then FX's "Alien: Earth" was created by Noah Hawley, who made his narrative mark with adaptations of "Fargo" and "Legion." And for Hawley, who was 9 when the first film debuted, his relationship to "Alien" has always been rooted in childhood and suspense.

He remembers how thrilled he was to be invited on a birthday outing to watch Ridley Scott's 1979 sci-fi masterpiece, and the disappointment when his parents objected to the film's R-rating. (He had to settle for Peter Falk and Alan Arkin in "The In-Laws.")

It wasn't until years later, as a teenager hanging out at a friend's house, that he finally experienced – on LaserDisc – one of the most chilling and visually iconic renderings of extraterrestrial life in the cinematic canon. And, as with millions of other viewers, the mid-film reveal – the defining moment when an alien being bursts from the chest of a space crew member – took him completely by surprise.

"Because of its pace and because of these blue-collar space truckers, [the film] lulls you into this sense of ordinariness," Hawley says. "So when the story really starts, which isn't for like 45 minutes into the movie, what happens is so shocking. It's the opposite of how a horror movie is built. You're supposed to feel dread from the first moment. This doesn't do that. It's earned."

That subversive structure is what came to mind when FX, all the way back in 2018, asked if he had an idea how to turn the storied sci-fi film franchise into a series. Of course he did. He approached it the way he's done with other established properties, including for a "Star Trek" film that never made it to screen: "What I like is the original lives in my head, it's in the corner of my eye. What are the feelings that linger with me from the film? And how do I create those feelings?"

The suspense was not just narrative; between delays caused by Disney's takeover of Fox and the dual strikes of 2023, it has taken seven years for Hawley's contribution to the nine-film "Alien" mythology – delivering the franchise's first TV show – to make its big reveal.

Premiering with two episodes on FX and Hulu Tuesday, the series is set in 2120, two years before the events of the original film. Viewers are introduced to a new crew charging through space aboard the Maginot – owned by the Weyland-Yutani company, the same megalomaniacal enterprise that sent Ellen Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) and her crew into orbit to retrieve the double-jawed, acid-filled Xenomorphs, the franchise's central alien antagonist, for weaponization. After a 65-year mission spent gathering specimens of alien life, the Maginot is on its way back to Earth when it crashes into a densely-populated city, governed by a rival corporation, Prodigy.

Prodigy, of course, wants to retrieve whatever findings its competitor has acquired and all manner of mystery and mayhem ensues.

The Times spoke with Hawley and his creative team about building the world of "Alien: Earth," which filmed in Thailand on 13 sound stages spread across five facilities.

'Peter Pan,' but with humanoid robots

With warring megacorporations, artificial intelligence and the specter of an existential crisis for humanity itself, the series may feel disturbingly familiar to viewers in 2025. But Hawley is more interested in mythology and cautionary tales than headlines, and one far older than "Alien."

In "Alien: Earth," Prodigy, one of the five megacorporations locked in a technological arms race, is run by a young, mad trillionaire known as Boy Kavalier (Samuel Blenkin). His company has developed "hybrids," humanoid robots infused with the human consciousness of children whose bodies were plagued by illness – they're known as the Lost Boys – and led by "Wendy" (Sydney Chandler), once a 12-year-old girl named Marcy who was the first to undergo the procedure.

And no, Hawley says, the "Peter Pan"-Disney tie-in wasn't a mandate by the new bosses – "I ended up feeling clever because I had managed to marry these [Fox and Disney] brands without intending to do so," he says.

"'Peter Pan,' if you go back and read the book, is actually a really dark [story]," Hawley says. "Peter is a really narcissistic, almost sociopathic boy. There's lines in there about how, when the kids grow up, he gets rid of them. Well, what does that mean? There's even a sequel where it's the daughter, Jane, he takes because Wendy is grown up. There's something really vindictive and weird about it. But it's also this iconic childhood [tale] – the kids never grow up."

Costume designer Suttirat Anne Larlarb says the rules for Wendy and the Lost Boys had to strike a balance between the individual within the system. When they start their lives in their adult bodies, they are introduced in their "transition" suits – fitted, monochromatic white sets that resemble stretched gauze – and receive a tailored, structured wardrobe from which they can each choose a limited assortment of pieces with a controlled color palette that has more richness and life than the corporation's staff uniforms: "Their daywear clothing feels individualized but is really a uniform, illustrating that they are each products developed in Neverland."

In "Alien: Earth," humanity is trapped between two existential threats – the primordial forces represented by the franchise's Xenomorphs, and the still unknown AI of the future.

"One of the things, in terms of thinking about the moment that we're living in right now with technology," Hawley says, "is this idea of who are the adults? I think what we really need right now are some real adults who think more about tomorrow than today. If you're going to hit the zeitgeist, you almost can't be aiming at it. When we wrote these scripts, there was no ChatGPT. But those issues, even Ridley saw them coming."

Retro-futurism and the USCSS Maginot

For those wondering if they'll recognize this "Peter Pan"-influenced bit of the "Alien" universe, well, one of the first choices Hawley had to make was environmental. "Are we doing retro-futurism? Are we doing the the cathode ray tube screens? Are we doing all of that stuff that in 1979 felt super futuristic, and to us now, feels like 1979?" he says. "And the answer is: of course we are. That is what 'Alien' is. What I had to wrestle with were the choices that Ridley made later on in 'Prometheus,' which was a prequel to 'Alien.' I was like, 'I can't really grapple with that in a way that makes sense to me. So I'm just going to adapt [the] first two films and focus on that aesthetic.'"

The original script had the prequel opening with a "Once upon a time ..." parable about Wendy and the Lost Boys. But that, he says, "didn't say 'Alien' right away." After some conversations with FX, the opening moments morphed into a truncated version of the original film's initial sequence that created a sense of unease by gradually drawing viewers into its deep space cargo ship.

Jeff Russo, the show's composer, wanted the melodic cues to evoke one feeling: "Oh f---. 'Alien.'"

"It's tension, release, tension, release," he says. Russo used a hybrid metal-stringed instrument made by an Austrian company. "I could use it in a lot of different ways – I can hit the metal and it makes very weird, otherworldly sounds; I can bow the strings and it has a very deep, very rich, very emotional yet scary sound."

The sound set up the tension inside the show's retro-futuristic space craft, which was designed to resemble the original film's famed vessel, the USCSS Nostromo. Andy Nicholson, the show's production designer, said his team meticulously studied the film and books featuring fan renderings to help replicate its labyrinth of metallic corridors, cramped compartments and blinking command center. It wasn't until construction on all but one of the ship's sets was complete that they were able to track down and access archived drawings from the original film's art department. Nicholson says there was a team of people who policed placement of Semiotic Standard, the color-coded information symbols designed by Ron Cobb for the Nostromo spacecraft, on Maginot.

"It was a huge responsibility and I didn't want to mess up," Nicholson says. "There's a history for the fans. You can't mess up the Easter eggs. There are specific things you can't get wrong because you'll just lose people."

Larlarb says about 2000 costumes – maybe more – were made, with 90 percent done in-house ("We didn't want it to feel like it was 'off the rack,'" she says). And the looks for the Maginot crew had to riff off the well-established uniform basis of the Nostromo and the Weylan-Yutani system. The palette is muted in creams and earth tones, with practical utilitarian jumpsuits and jackets.

"I made sure to create a uniform system that could reside unquestionably in that canon," she says. "Our Maginot is on a different kind of mission – a research exploration mission – so the crew uniforms needed to reflect a different branch from the original."

With the vessel's collision on Earth, the retro-futuristic aesthetic carries over into the sleek cityscape of Prodigy City. Nicholson says he pulled references of car interior designs and European furniture designs from around the late '70s – "That was futuristic. It was the first time you saw, very briefly, digital displays in car dashboards" – as he thought about what Earth should look like in their version of the future.

A piece of tech they decided to add? Tablets.

"They didn't really think about tablets in those first two films, but we have tablets," Hawley says. "So, what are those like?"

Xenomorph and its alien buddies

The franchise's iconic space monster, the Xenomorph, is the returning megastar of the series. Originally designed for the 1979 film by surrealist artist H.R. Giger, the creature's looming presence is telegraphed early, in rapid cuts during the opening sequence. Like its relatives, it towers and stalks the wrecked spacecraft and whatever is in sight. The organism's various states of evolution – as an egg sac or the Facehuggers that hatch from them – are back too.

The intensity of the Xenomorph's barbarism really begins in Episode 2, which places the skulking creature in more action-heavy sequences. (And just as in the original film, the figure is operated by a stunt performer; here it's Cameron Brown.)

"We show more of the Xenomorph than everybody else has shown," says Dana Gonzales, a longtime collaborator of Hawley's and director of the episode. "Later on, you realize why we do that; it doesn't just become a character that's coming out of a dark hole. There's this point where it's going to be much more present. Finding that language of how to get there, it starts with the first episode of giving fans what they hope to be tuning in for."

While its towering and sleek exoskeleton frame and otherworldly facial features – this one has human-like silver teeth, dripping in goo – remain a formidable sight, its invisible terror is what often brings the horror. One unforgettable scene ends in gruesome bloodshed, but its brutality is enforced by sound while the fatal attack is visually obscured.

"Noah and I both agreed that what you don't see and what you hear is scarier," Gonzales says. "We can't show a crazy amount of slaughter on TV – we do in the show, later on there are some pretty brutal scenes. But there's still a certain amount of containment."

Adds Russo, who sometimes used an Aztec death whistle, a small, skull-shaped instrument with air chambers that produce a scream-like sound, to signal the creature's horror: "Music is only as important as the silence that precedes it. You don't see what the Xenomorph is doing, but when you see what happened afterwards, all of a sudden, it's all in your head."

The show adds other extraterrestrial creatures, just as eerie and lethal, to the "Alien" canon too. But those are best seen, not read about – like every "Alien" iteration, it's all about the suspense.

Netflix is building its own celebrity subculture with its reality show stars

By WENDY LEE
Los Angeles Times (TNS)

Jerod Harris / Getty Images for Netflix / TNS

Harry Jowsey attends Netflix Summer Break at Santa Monica Pier on July 17 in Santa Monica, California.

LOS ANGELES — Reality star Harry Jowsey has flirted, broken hearts and lied on TV. But now the 28-year-old Australian says he's ready to find his soulmate – and he's nervous.

Last month, applications opened on a website for his new Netflix reality show, "Let's Marry Harry," with thousands of people signing up for the chance to be the former "Too Hot to Handle" star's bride.

On the day the show was announced, Jowsey marveled that women posted TikToks on how they just applied to be on his show.

"I don't think anyone would click on it, because it's a vulnerable thing to do to apply for a dating show, especially one where we're getting married," Jowsey told The Times earlier this month, laughing. "It's like 'Oh, people like me!'"

Netflix is counting on it.

Jowsey is part of what the streaming video giant calls its "Netflix Reality Universe" – made up of regular people looking for love or who are up for competing against others. For example, " Love on the Spectrum," follows people on the autism spectrum going on dates. "Too Hot to Handle " challenges attractive contestants not to engage in sexual activity. "Squid Game: The Challenge" features people competing in games similar to the hit South Korean drama.

Reality TV is a key part of Netflix's programming strategy, which aims to take the place of traditional TV with a wide variety of programming for virtually every demographic. Dating shows, cooking competitions and live reunion specials are comfort food that help supplement the streamer's large library of movies, scripted dramas like "Squid Game," kids shows like "Sesame Street" and, increasingly, live events and sports.

By taking breakout stars from its reality shows and casting them in a variety of programs and roles that promote the streaming service, Netflix helps boost their clout, and vice versa.

"Netflix has created its own subculture with their audience," said Tom Nunan, a former studio and network executive. "If that means having some of your favorite reality talent move over to some of their other reality shows, so much the better. It's just trying to keep it all in the family."

"Let's Marry Harry," which debuts next year and is executive-produced by podcaster Alex Cooper, is a prime example of Netflix's strategy. Since he appeared on "Too Hot to Handle," Netflix has found ways to make Jowsey a bigger star, putting him in the second season of dating series "Perfect Match" and casting him in an upcoming movie on the streaming service, romantic comedy "The Wrong Paris."

Netflix has given similar opportunities to "Too Hot to Handle" costar Chloe Veitch, who has appeared as a contestant on "The Circle" and "Perfect Match" and was a host of "Sneaky Links: Dating After Dark." Comedian Michelle Buteau, who served as a host of Netflix reality show "The Circle," has comedy specials on the streaming service and stars in her own scripted series, "Survival of the Thickest."

Positioned as Netflix's first " The Bachelor "-like reality show, "Let's Marry Harry" elevates Jowsey, who is known for qualities that did not exactly make him obvious marriage material. In the second season of "Perfect Match," he initially lied about kissing another contestant.

The drama that comes with reality TV is part of the gig.

"We're gonna be judged regardless," Jowsey said in an interview while eating a New York strip steak at Calabra, a rooftop restaurant in Santa Monica. "It's kind of freeing to just be like, 'Well, f--- it. I'm just gonna do it and be myself, and people aren't gonna like it, people are gonna love it.' It's the best job in the world, just get to be myself on camera and have fun."

Jowsey's playfulness, charm and mischievous nature are some of the reasons why audiences have been drawn to him since "Too Hot to Handle" premiered on Netflix five years ago, said Brandon Riegg, Netflix's vice president of nonfiction series and sports.

"He's like a lovable rapscallion, right?" Riegg said. "He's got the accent. He's got a bit of mischief in those eyes. He's fun. He's a good person ... if the show is a more efficient way of helping him find the potential Mrs. Jowsey then I think, awesome. And so we'll go on that journey with him."

Riegg was instrumental in building Netflix's reality TV programming lineup when he joined Netflix in 2016. Back then, the streamer's reality slate was bare. But Netflix today has more than 1,800 unscripted titles, including 500 reality TV titles.

The streamer developed worldwide hits such as "Love is Blind," which has been adapted in 10 countries, and the U.S. version will launch its ninth season later this year. "Love is Blind" was the second-most watched original streaming show on U.S. TV screens last year, according to Nielsen.

Riegg said reality dating shows are "fertile ground." When he was at ABC, Riegg said he and executive Rob Mills were instrumental in coming up with the idea for "Bachelor in Paradise," which is a reality dating show that brings together the contestants from past seasons of "The Bachelor" or "The Bachelorette."

At Netflix, the contestants on "Love is Blind" and "Too Hot to Handle" have participated in other reality programs such as "Perfect Match" or "Battle Camp" that bring together participants from across the streamer's unscripted universe. Jowsey has been one of the more controversial contestants. "Let's Marry Harry" was a logical next step.

"It was good idea with the right piece of talent and the right auspices behind it, so we're excited to get going on it," Riegg said.

The Netflix strategy, following in the footsteps of other TV networks like MTV and Bravo, has given some people, like Jowsey, the opportunity to build massive followings from relatively modest beginnings, putting their faces in front of hundreds of millions subscribers around the world. That creates a virtuous cycle, getting the star's social media fandoms to return to watch other shows. As of last year, Netflix said it had more than 301 million subscribers.

Jowsey's social media following rose from 140,000 to 2.4 million on Instagram after "Too Hot to Handle" premiered in 2020. Today, he has 4.4 million followers on Instagram and 5.1 million on TikTok. He hosts a podcast called "Boyfriend Material" and sells skin care products.

Jowsey grew up on a farm in Australia, the youngest of five siblings. When he was in university, his brother's friend died by suicide – a wake-up call for Jowsey that university wasn't the place he wanted to be. Jowsey said he loved making people laugh, and first leaned into modeling and then landed on New Zealand reality dating show, "Heartbreak Island."

With his wavy brown hair and self-described cheeky vibe, Jowsey applied to multiple reality shows, eventually landing a role on "Too Hot to Handle." He wasn't even subscribed to Netflix at the time because he didn't have the money for it.

"Obviously, it just turned into this beautiful relationship, and I get to live out my biggest dream," Jowsey said. "I remember putting in my manifesting book, 'One day I'll have a bachelor-style show' ... and it's here."

On the day "Let's Marry Harry" opened contestant applications, Jowsey left from an early dinner to Netflix Summer Break, an event at the Santa Monica Pier promoting the streamer's reality stars that about 450 people attended.

Jowsey and his team boarded a black SUV headed to the Netflix event. When asked what is the ideal person he's looking for, Jowsey said, "Someone who is happy. I'm going in with no idea ... 'My type' ... hasn't worked out."

Once at the event, he took photos on a lip-shaped red couch and on the boardwalk under a large sign that said "Netflix Summer Break." The event resembled a summer beachside carnival, with loud pop and R&B music, a stand serving colorful cotton candy, food trucks and a supply of themed drinks, including "I Do" (a gin beverage) and "I Do ... Not" (a concoction with tequila).

As he walked past crowds of people, he got catcalls. "Harry, you sexy m------------," one attendee told him. He greeted Tanner Smith from Netflix's "Love on the Spectrum," Mark L. Walberg, host of "Temptation Island" and posed for photos with actors from "The Wrong Paris," a movie about a woman who joins a dating show that she thinks is in Paris, France, but learns is actually in Paris, Texas.

Jowsey went through a string of media interviews. "This is the last one," Jowsey said, referring to his stint on reality dating shows. The interviewer was skeptical – "Are you sure about that?"

He hasn't had the best track record in love.

His relationship with "Too Hot to Handle" costar Francesca Farago fizzled even after he proposed with a candy ring. He was attracted to Jessica Vestal on "Perfect Match" but then kissed costar Melinda Melrose and lied about it.

Jowsey said he doesn't want to hurt anyone anymore, a tough goal when the whole conceit of the "Bachelor" genre involves rejecting potential mates.

"I hope the person that I marry is so happy that it outweighs all the hurt," Jowsey said. "I feel like if it was the wrong person, and they were with me for too long, then it'll hurt more so I want them to hurt as least as possible."

After Jowsey finished his interviews, he appeared onstage as part of the Netflix Summer Break evening program, where reality stars were given awards – favorite reality couple, for example – and others promoted their shows. The program's host AJ McLean of the Backstreet Boys called Jowsey one of his "all-time favorite flirts."

As the Netflix Summer Break program drew to a close, the reality stars were getting ready to experience the rides on the pier exclusively for an hour. "Try not to drink too much before you go on the coasters," McLean said, encouraging attendees to "eat, drink and be merry, and create content, of course."

But for Jowsey, he's already preparing for a life beyond reality TV. On a typical day, he said he wakes up at 5 or 6 a.m. and works on trading stocks. One of the companies he's invested in is Netflix.

"I realize this reality TV, this life, it's all kind of rented," Jowsey said.

BOOKS

A masked serial killer menaces true crime podcaster Daphne Woolsoncroft's debut novel

By KELLI SKYE FADROSKI
The Orange County Register (TNS)

Growing up in Studio City, Daphne Woolsoncroft wanted to be one of two things: a detective or an author.

And you could argue she's done both: As co-host of the true crime podcast "Going West," which just celebrated its 500-episode milestone in May, she's been doing plenty of detective work, albeit in more of an armchair-style capacity.

Now, she's now a legit author.

Woolsoncroft's debut novel, "Night Watcher," seamlessly blends her passions of true crime, horror movies and writing into a thrilling piece of suspenseful fiction centered around a masked serial killer known as The Hiding Man. While she found inspiration in countless slasher movies featuring masked antagonists, as well as the hundreds of true crime cases she's mulled over since starting the podcast in late 2018, Woolsoncroft also drew from a family connection to one of the greatest novelists of all time: "Frankenstein" author Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley.

"She's a distant ancestor on my mom's side," Woolsoncroft confirms. "It's been passed down through some documentation, but I'm still very much trying to find a genealogist that can help find that exact connection. That's something my mom and I have been on a mission with in the last year. We've always been so inspired by that connection. My mom's a huge horror and literature fan, so it does mean a lot to us."

Wanting to be like Shelley, who wrote "Frankenstein" at the age of 18, Woolsoncroft said she rushed a self-published novella when she was 19, but "It was really bad. It was not 'Frankenstein' by any means," she said with a laugh.

"Night Watcher" follows the story of Portland, Oregon, resident Nola Strate, a radio host of a late-night program, "Night Watch," that takes listener call-ins to discuss paranormal stories. She inherited this popular radio show from her semi-famous father, and all is well until an on-air listener call goes awry. This conjures up Strate's childhood brush with The Hiding Man, who was never caught and seemingly disappeared after a string of brutal murders.

But has he returned to seek revenge?

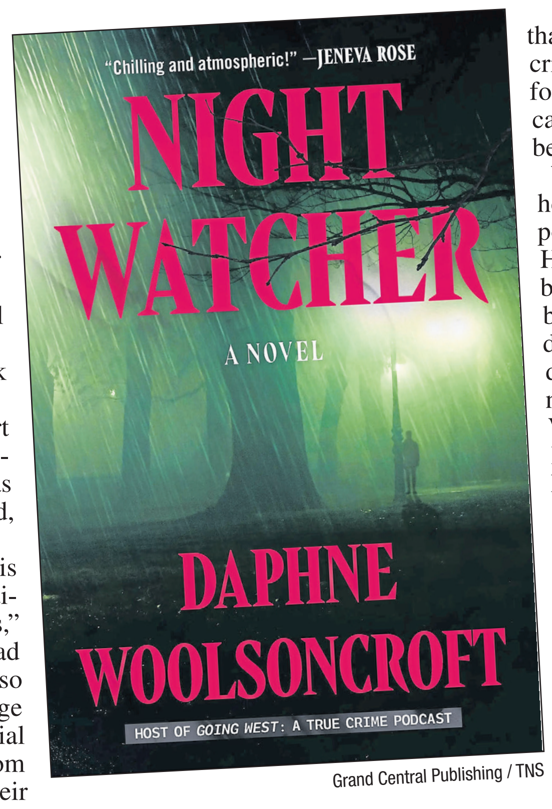
The Hiding Man was in part influenced by a real-life, convicted serial killer who was given the moniker BTK (Bind, Torture, Kill).

"BTK was a big one for this story because he did kill multiple people, then take a hiatus," Woolsoncroft said. "I had read so much about BTK and also just having a general knowledge of the motives of so many serial killers and how many come from damaged backgrounds and their own personal rejections throughout their lives make them want to turn on others. Just reading all of those stories and recognizing the patterns, I knew how to make a perfect serial killer."

Her love for slasher films and a classic like John Carpenter's "Halloween," which features the iconic masked killer Michael Myers, made her think carefully about the importance of The Hiding Man being a masked character – it's described as a pale facial covering with dark stitched, sewn eyes and a mouth. That anonymity makes this lurking figure even more terrifying.

"There's no expression, which is what's so scary about a mask," she explains.

The idea for this particular style of mask came from a sketch drawn by her father. It was originally intended to appear on the label of a candle she had made, dubbed The Witch House, from one of her many former entrepreneurial endeavors.



Grand Central Publishing / TNS

"I asked him to just draw me these creepy guys," she said, noting that one image instantly stood out. "When I was writing this book, I saw that image again, and that's really what inspired it; so I stole that from my dad. It felt like it wasn't too campy or too out of left field, but also something we really haven't seen before."

For Woolsoncroft, true crime isn't just a hobby, it's personal. Her interest in the subject was sparked by the real-life disappearance of her beloved aunt, Carol, in Fort Myers, Florida, in 1984, more than a decade before she was born.

"I think being part of a family where there was such injustice and somebody was taken from my mom and my grandparents' lives and seeing how that haunted them, I just always was interested in similar stories," she said. "The first true crime I got into was true crime podcasts, and that just felt like a great thing that I could do was to start a true crime podcast and build a platform to talk about my own aunt's case in hopes it would one day be solved."

While the subject matter is heavy, Woolsoncroft and her podcast co-host and husband, Heath Merryman, often take breaks from the true crime beat and watch classic comedy films, go bowling or out to dinner with friends and family near their Los Angeles home. Woolsoncroft said she still likes to escape into a classic horror flick or a thrilling novel. She just finished "Bloom" by Delilah Dawson and said it had her on edge and cited Camila Bruce's "You Let Me In" as being one of her favorites, "though disturbing on a psychological level as it intertwines childhood trauma with a fictional man she calls The Pepper Man, which I loved," she added.

"Sadly, I don't find a ton of books that scare me," she said. "But one I read recently that stressed me out and made me run up the stairs in the dark was "Diavola" by Jennifer Thorne. The way she describes a yellow-haired woman in the mirror standing behind protagonist Anna is something I thought about every time I brushed my teeth or woke up in the middle of the night for weeks afterwards."

With "Night Watcher" now under her belt, Woolsoncroft reports a second book is on the way. Unlike the horror movie vibe of "Night Watcher," she said her next effort is more of a "horror-adjacent thriller."

"I wanted to explore more the sides of mystery and thriller writing that aren't super horror movie-esque, but it is creepier and has a lot of stalking because I seem fascinated with that trope," she describes. "And it takes place by a lake, so it's a scary lake-thriller coming next summer."

REVIEW

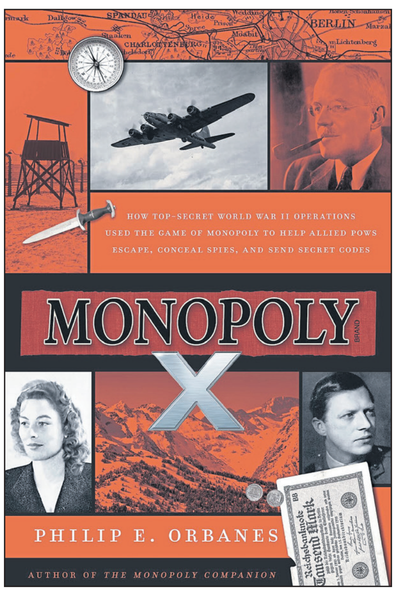
'Monopoly X' says the board game helped win World War II

By CHRIS HEWITT
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

You think books have covered everything there is to write about World War II skullduggery, and then you stumble upon the book about how spies used Monopoly to pull the wool over Nazis' eyes.

The endlessly popular and sometimes just plain endless game figured into the war in several ways, according to "Monopoly X," by game designer and expert Philip E. Orbanes: Soldiers and others filled downtime by buying up Park Place and Atlantic Avenue, of course. But, less conventionally, some spies were code-named with monikers that echoed the games' playing pieces, including a quadruple crosser named Harold Cole, who was known as Top Hat, and a female agent that, Orbanes writes, was named Benoîte Jean but called herself Nori (a backwards version of "iron," another playing piece).

"Monopoly X" is at its most compelling and convincing in its opening chapters, which will appeal to fans of Ben Macintyre books about WWII such as "Operation Mincemeat" and "Agent Zigzag."



Harper / TNS

It begins at Colditz Castle, the German fortress where escape-prone Allied officers were held captive. When a package arrives, containing Monopoly board games that supposedly were sent by a relief agency for the entertainment of the officers, Orbanes does a terrific job of supplying details that make the scene vivid.

It starts with Capt. Patrick Reid, a Brit who was in charge of escape efforts: "Reid directed two of the Monopoly games, which were genuine, to the makeshift library where books and games were available to all POWs. He knew in advance that the third game would be 'loaded.' A subtle red dot added to the Free Parking space of its board provided verification."

Hidden in the "loaded" game were items useful to escapees, including maps, money and a special saw that, according to Orbanes, came in handy in multiple ways. There's an against-the-odds heroism in his opening chapters that brings to mind the classic movie "The Great Escape" and that promises good things to come in "Monopoly X."

Alas, "Monopoly X" proves to be one of those books that would have worked better as a magazine article. The rest of the stories are disjointed, poorly organized and, in some cases, have very little to do with the board game. Having encountered these stories through his Monopoly connections, Orbanes seems to have unearthed new material – I can't find much about "Nori" online – but the way he presents that material is often confusing.

In the end, other than those first couple chapters, I wouldn't recommend "Monopoly X." If you're interested in spycraft in the 1940s, you're better off with Macintyre's stellar work about espionage. And if it's Monopoly that trips your trigger, you should go for Mary Pilon's absorbing history of the game, " The Monopolists," instead.

BESTSELLERS

Here are the bestsellers for the week that ended Saturday, Aug. 2, compiled from data from independent and chain bookstores, book wholesalers and independent distributors nationwide, powered by Circana BookScan.

Hardcover fiction

1. Atmosphere. Taylor Jenkins Reid. Ballantine
2. She Didn't See It Coming. Shari Lapena. Viking/Dorman
3. Not Quite Dead Yet. Holly Jackson. Bantam
4. The Deal (collector's ed.). Elle Kennedy. Bloom
5. The Hamptons Lawyer. Patterson/Lupica. Little, Brown
6. Never Flinch. Stephen King. Scribner
7. Wrath of the Dragons. Olivia Rose Darling. Delacorte
8. Onyx Storm. Rebecca Yarros. Red Tower
9. An Inside Job. Daniel Silva. Harper
10. My Friends. Fredrik Backman. Atria

Hardcover nonfiction

1. The Let Them Theory. Mel Robbins. Hay House
2. On Power. Mark R. Levin. Threshold
3. The Idaho Four. Patterson/Ward. Little, Brown
4. Don't Believe Everything You Think (expanded ed.). Joseph Nguyen. Authors Equity
5. Six Dimes and a Nickel. Damon West. Post Hill
6. Everything Is Tuberculosis. John Green. Crash Course
7. The Science of Scaling. Hardy/Erickson. Hay House Business
8. Vaccines. Leake/McCullough. Childrens Health Defense
9. Gwyneth. Amy Odell. Gallery
10. Abundance. Klein/Thompson. Avid Reader

Trade paperback

1. Do Not Disturb. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
2. One Golden Summer. Carley Fortune. Berkley
3. Lights Out. Navessa Allen. Slowburn
4. Caught Up. Navessa Allen. Slowburn
5. The Tenant. Freida McFadden. Poisoned Pen
6. Remarkably Bright Creatures. Shelby Van Pelt. Ecco
7. All the Colors of the Dark. Chris Whitaker. Crown
8. Demon with Benefits (deluxe ed.). Aurora Ascher. Kensington
9. Fourth Wing. Rebecca Yarros. Red Tower
10. Iron Flame. Rebecca Yarros. Red Tower

Reprinted from Publishers Weekly.

REVIEW

Long forgotten, 'The Club' was an early advocate for creative women

Bloomsbury / TNS

By HAMILTON CAIN
The Minnesota Star Tribune (TNS)

"The Gilded Age," HBO's popular series, just premiered its third season, dramatizing antagonisms between old-money Manhattan gentry and the nouveau riche who strive to join their velvet-draped parlors during an epoch of immense wealth, rife with robber barons and Fifth Avenue doyennes.

In France, this period is known as "La Belle Époque," which overlaps our Gilded Age. Art historian and podcaster Jennifer Dasal limns the intersection in her breezy if uneven "The Club," showcasing the American Girls' Club in Paris, a gathering spot for young women keen to study in the City of Lights.

In 1893, Elisabeth Mills Reid, wife of the minister to France, and Helen Newell opened the doors at 4 rue de Chevreuse, nestled within the Left Bank, a sprawling, 100-room structure which housed a restaurant, a concierge, and spartan quarters for residents. During its two decades, well-to-do ladies with creative aspirations sipped tea in the garden and walked to nearby academies for drawing and painting lessons.

The Club is largely forgotten today, but Dasal intends to rescue its story and reputation. She deftly sketches the social milieu that shaped the organization. Her portraits dazzle.

Here, we meet an array of characters determined to slip the trappings of domesticity: the suffragette sculptor (and possibly queer) Alice Morgan Wright; the doomed Philadelphian, Gertrude Weil; the atypically working-class Southerner, Alice Rumph; and the gifted Alabaman, Anne Goldthwaite. Not all lodged at the Club, but they gravitated toward the company and common purpose, exchanging ideas while indulging in creature comforts. (Menus included turkey and salade de saison plus macarons for dessert, washed down with red wine.)

As Dasal observes, "Once a new tenant passed over the building's threshold, she would typically fall under its spell quickly and deeply. There was a lot to love about the charming, historic structure. 'We paid little board but lived in the midst of luxury and romance,' asserted resident Anne Goldthwaite."

Enrolled in classes and tutorials, the tenants soaked up stellar education that was unthinkable in their homeland. The level of instruction was rigorous, hence the attraction. Dasal notes that the courses were more restricted and expensive for women. The goal, often elusive, was acceptance to prestigious French salons. The Club also staged its own exhibits, with reports trickling back to stateside newspapers.

Dasal's narrative sustains a warm, conversational tone, and her research is revelatory, but she never quite makes the case that the Club was more than a Parisian sorority for affluent white women.

Reid – favorite child of California's richest man and the spouse of a multi-millionaire and politician, versed in the rituals of power – was literally a daughter of the patriarchy. The author avoids an interrogation of privilege, diminishing her book. Dasal seems aware of this conundrum, yet she's ultimately focused on recovering a vital (if short-lived) institution from anonymity – one whose contribution was significant, even enduring.

"Some may argue that the Club did not produce any 'big-name' artists," Dasal opines. "It is, perhaps, a fair question. But these are exactly the reasons why the Club deserves a second look in the history of American art. It singularly harbored a large and continually rotating community of independent, talented, and driven young women who were among the first to actively seek professionalization in the visual arts."

Let the debates commence!

AUTOMOTIVE

Hypercar, hyper-price

Corvette ZR1X brings the thunder for over $200k

GM / TNS

Blade Silver Corvette ZR1X and Sebring Orange Tintcoat Corvette ZR1X Convertible with ZTK Performance Package.

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

The Chevy Corvette ZR1X hypercar is all about the numbers. Zero-to-60 in less than two seconds, 233 mph top speed, 1,250 horsepower, 6.49.3-minute lap time around the 12.9-mile Nürburgring circuit in Germany.

Now we know the number that will allow you access to those performance numbers.

The ZR1X will start at $207,395 for the standard 1LZ coupe, making it the first Corvette to list at over 200 grand. A special edition Quail Silver Limited Edition will launch at $241,395 and be previewed at the Quail Motorsports Gathering in California on Friday, Aug. 15.

The all-wheel-drive, hybrid-electric ZR1X and its sister, rear-wheel-drive, 1,064-horsepower ZR1 are the top-drawer models of an eighth-generation Corvette lineup that begins with the 495-horsepower, 6.2-liter V8-powered Corvette Stingray priced at $70,195. Two other models are available: the road-focused, hybrid E-Ray at $108,795 and the track-focused Z06 stuffed with the C8.R race-car's high-revving, 5.5-liter V-8 starting at $116,995.

The ZR1X's nosebleed price is still a fraction of comparable European hyper exotics like the $3.7 million, 1,184-horsepower Ferrari F80 and $2.1 million, 1,258-horsepower McLaren W1 – not to mention the $2.7 million Mercedes AMG One hypercar that owns the Nürburgring lap record at 6.29.0 minutes. It is also about $120k cheaper than Ford's Mustang GTD supercar, which starts at $327,960 (the Mustang ran the Nürburgring in 6.52.1 minutes).

In this supercar age of insane numbers, hypercar is defined as an all-wheel-drive sportscar making in excess of 1,000 horses.

The ZR1X's Nürburgring time, set by Corvette engineer Drew Cattell, is the fastest lap produced by an American-made auto and the fastest lap recorded by a non-pro driver.

Other ZR1X model pricing includes $217,395 for the 1LZ hardtop convertible. The ZR1X 3LZ coupe will start with an MSRP of $218,395 for the 3LZ coupe, and the 3LZ convertible at $228,395.

In an indication of the ZR1X's play for exotic car buyers, the Quail Silver Limited Edition will be shown at the exclusive Quail Lodge & Golf Club in Carmel, California during Monterey Car Week on Friday, Aug. 15 – a long way from the next day's Woodward Dream Cruise, where hundreds of Corvette owners will cruise Motown's main street. The McLaren W1 hypercar is also making its debut at Monterey Car Week.

The Quail Silver Limited Edition – exclusively available on the ZR1X 3LZ convertible – is a showcase for material finery including Blade Silver Matte, Corvette's first production matte finish since the 1960s. The color was inspired by the first-generation, 1957-59 Corvette's Inca Silver paint color.

"Corvettes are the pride and joy of their owners – they honor its craftmanship and design as much as its engineering excellence," said Scott Bell, vice president of Global Chevrolet. "The ZR1X Quail Silver Limited Edition presents a highly exclusive option for Corvette customers looking for a collectible item."

A "Limited Edition" plaque is included along the interior waterfall speaker, complete with build number.

The interior is dressed in what Chevy calls Sky Cool & Medium Ash Gray with Habanero accents – a new color scheme available for all 2026 Corvette models. Other Quail Edition highlights include orange brake calipers, black exhaust tips and carbon-black mirrors.

Under the skin, the limited-edition model shares the same steroid-fed drivetrain as other ZR1X models. The hypercar is essentially a combination of the technologies found on other C8 'Vettes: all-wheel-drive and front electric motor from the E-Ray; 5.5-liter, dual-overhead-cam engine from the Z06 amidships; twin-turbochargers like the ZR1; updated 2026 interior with more efficient, high-tech console. The result is a stratospheric 1,250 horsepower and neck-snapping acceleration for occupants coddled by a luxury interior.

Production of the hypercar begins later this year at Corvette's assembly plant in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Henry Payne is auto critic for The Detroit News.

AUTO REVIEW

Tesla-fighting Volvo EX30 is cute, quick, and range-challenged

By HENRY PAYNE
The Detroit News (TNS)

Cubism in the 1910s, surrealism in the 1930s, pop art in the 1960s, installation art in the '80s. The art world has seen multiple movements over the last 100 years. So too has the art of the automobile. The post-WW2 jet-inspired tailfin era, muscle cars of the '60s, mid-engine '80s sportscars, 1990s jelly bean sedans.

Digital age electric vehicles have given designers a new canvas to paint on. One of my favorites is the 2025 Volvo EX30 that I recently piloted to Charlevoix and back.

Like its Tesla, Rivian and Cadillac peers, the EX30 has embraced the grille-less fascia and simple, screen-centric interior. And, just as installation art is limited to a specific place, so are EVs best admired as urban vehicles – as my trip's charging follies demonstrate.

My two-tone yellow and black EX30 cutie welcomed me with a smile.

That is to say, the mouth-like diagonal line through the circular Volvo logo that anchors the fascia. No internal combustion engine, no grille. The fascia is anchored by signature "Thor's hammer" headlights inside a black frame (a theme repeated on the rear facia). EX30 reminded me of one of the colorful characters from the 2005 flick "Robots."

Sensing the card key in my pocket, the door unlocked. As its nomenclature implies, the subcompact EX30 is Volvo's gateway to its EX40 and EX90 EVs lineup – though you'll need to adjust your pricing expectations. Stylish subcompact, affordable, premium, internal-combustion-engine SUVs are a thing, including sub-$40K cuties like the Buick Envista, Mazda CX-30 and Acura ADX.

My all-wheel-drive, $48K EX30 Performance Ultra tester is priced more in line with premium EV compacts like the Tesla Model Y, Ford Mustang Mach-E and Lexus RZ450. All-wheel-drive, panoramic roof, 19-inch wheels, posh materials. Unlike those machines, however, the EX30 has little rear legroom (32 inches) compared to, say, the Tesla at 40 inches. A six-footer can't sit behind himself. Starting at $54K, the EX40 will buy you four more inches of legroom.

Under the airy, panoramic roof, the cabin is beautifully spare. Like Scandinavian furniture.

Like a Tesla, the interior is anchored by a big screen. Doors are scrubbed of buttons, and essential controls (mirrors, glovebox) are accessed through the screen. Unlike a Tesla, the 12.3-ich display is vertical and the cabin trimmed with classic Volvo touches like silver vertical air vents and door handles – and a floating console that offers plenty of space underneath for a handbag.

Volvo (and sister Polestar EV performance brand) were first to market with the Google Built-in operating system (now ubiquitous on GM products and coming to Honda), which makes navigation easy – especially in a low-range electric car that needs to find chargers on trips. To keep costs down, EX30 has a small (69 kWh) battery with just 253 miles of range compared to, say, Model Y's 311 miles of range.

Hey, Google, navigate to Charlevoix, Michigan.

The Swede scheduled two stops to make the 250-mile trip and still have 25 percent of charge left at destination (in case I have to make another trip on arrival). Why two stops for a 250-mile trip, you say? Because EPA estimate range numbers appear calculated for a perfect, 70-degree day traveling at 55 mph.

This July summer's day, however, was running hot at 95 degrees with rain in the forecast on a 75 mph interstate. My range would be more like 200 miles. That, and you only charge to 80 percent at fast chargers because that last 80-100 percent is (like filling a beer) sloooow. Actual range? 160 miles.

ZOT! The peppy 400-torque EX30 merged with authority onto I-75 North.

Like its electric peers, the Volvo is smooth as silk. But for the price, it's lacking hands-free driving like Model Y/Chevy Equinox. Volvo telegraphs the feature is coming, however, as a steering wheel-mounted camera watched me constantly. This being a Volvo, it nagged me incessantly to keep my eyes on the road, my hands on the steering wheel, and my teeth brushed (kidding about that last part).

EX30 navigated to the first fast charging stop in the parking lot of a Bay City Meijer store, an Electrify America station that ... was shut down. Oh.

"OUT OF ORDER" read the charger screens, the stalls wrapped in yellow tape with a line of blue shopping carts blocking access just in case customers didn't get the message. Unlike Tesla, which integrates its charging network with its car's navi system, the Volvo is dependent on third-party companies. EX30 had no idea the EA charger was down.

Plan B. Right next to the EA chargers was a bank of eight Tesla chargers, seven of them available. Volvo has signed an agreement to use Tesla chargers, so I plugged in and opened the Tesla app to connect.

"No chargers within range," read the app. Huh?

According to Clean Technica, 150 kW Tesla V2 chargers like those at Bay City are un-accessible to non-Tesla users.

Plan C. I asked the Google navigation to find fast chargers nearby. Success: Blink and ChargePoint stations were available within two miles. I chose Blink because the map indicated all four stalls were available – and because it was in a Ford dealership and (presumably) well maintained.

At the Ford dealer, I plugged in at 56 cents per kWh and walked across the street for a Tim Horton's doughnut while EX30's battery charged for 20 minutes from 50-90 percent. Note to self: at 56 cents per kWh, the 500-mile round trip would cost $93 versus $73 for a comparable, gas-powered Volvo XC40 at $4.10-per-gallon premium fuel.

Back on the road, Volvo navigated me to a second Electrify America charging stop in Gaylord, but (fearing EA unreliability) I chose a ChargePoint in Waters instead and arrived in Charlevoix with 36 percent of charge left (72 miles). All told, the trip had taken 6.23 hours to complete – longer than the 4.37 hours Google Built-in promised (which was already longer than the 3.52 hours in a gas XC40).

No wonder EV sales have stalled.

Back in its natural habitat (that is, an urban environment) in Charlevoix, the Swede was happy as Bjorn Borg on a clay tennis court. On two-lane M-32, it squirted from 0-60 mph in a Porsche 911 Carrera GTS-like 3.3 seconds – quicker than an all-wheel-drive Model Y's 4.8.

I'm a fan of Tesla and Rivian spare interiors, and EX30 was a pleasing place to spend time. Clever details abounded like a fashionable square steering wheel, storage cubbies and Google Built-in, which was always ready with a joke. "Hey, Google, tell me joke," I said.

Why can't a bicycle stand up on its own? Because it's two tired.

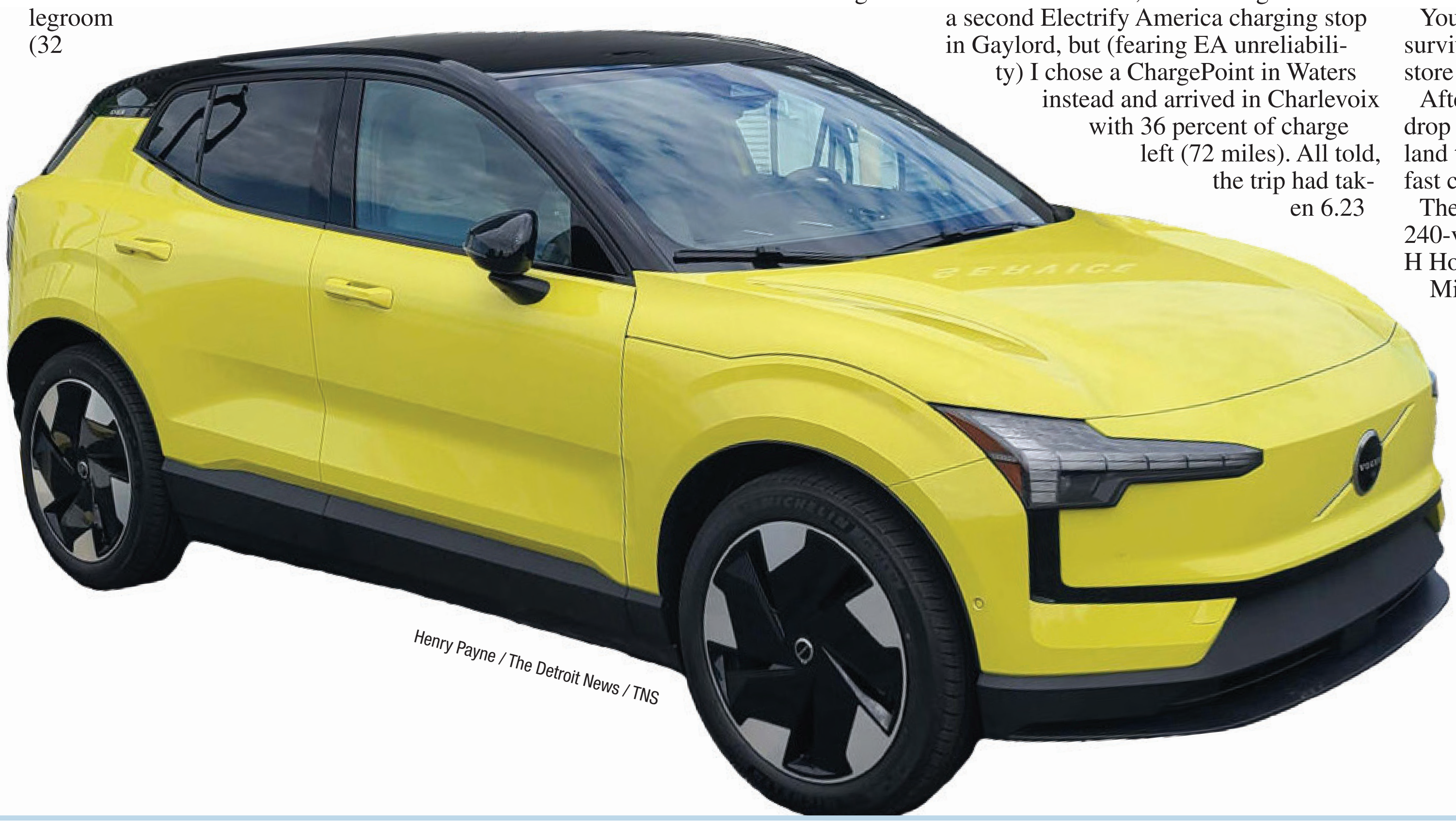
You have to have a sense of humor to survive the charging follies. More were in store for the trip home.

After a Traverse City airport detour to drop off family, EX30 navigated to Midland to recharge at a "very fast 240-kW fast charger." Wrong.

The charger was actually a very slow 240-volt charger in the parking lot of the H Hotel on Main Street. Sigh. Fortunately, Midland wasn't far (20 miles) from the same Bay City Blink charger that saved me on the way up. Though this time, the first Blink charging stall I tried was out of order. Hey, Google, tell me a joke!

I had 70 miles (33 percent) of charge left when I arrived home. Which is where EVs belong. Close to home.

With its peppy acceleration, cute looks and iPhone interior, EX30 is an artistic statement. Need a trip car? Allow me to suggest the midsize, gas-powered XC60 SUV with 38 inches of rear legroom and 564 miles of range. For the same price as a subcompact EX30.



Henry Payne / The Detroit News / TNS

2025 Volvo EX30

★★★

Vehicle type: All-wheel drive, five-passenger SUV

Price: Base $46,295, including $1,295 destination charge ($48,395 Performance Ultra as tested)

Powerplant: 64 kWh lithium-ion battery pack mated to dual electric motors

Power: 422 horsepower, 400 pound-feet torque

Transmission: Single-speed automatic

Performance: 0-60 mph, 3.3 seconds (Car and Driver); top speed, 114 mph

Weight: 4,189 pounds

Range: EPA est. 109 MPGe; 253 miles on full charge

Report card

Highs: Stylish Scandinavian design; sportscar acceleration

Lows: Small back seat; pricey

TECHNOLOGY

2025's best projectors

By CNET
CNET.com (TNS)

Want a bigger image than even the best TV? Want something wall-sized, either inside or outside, for the ultimate movie night? A projector is one of the cheapest ways to get an enormous image.

Modern projectors are bright and compact, and many have 4K resolution. Most have streaming built in, so you can watch Disney, Netflix or anything else on them. Imagine playing games from a PlayStation or Xbox with life-sized characters.

That's what the best projectors can create.

Whether you want an amazing home theater or want to host your own backyard movie night, most projectors are easy to set up and only require a power cable and some Wi-Fi. The three projectors featured here each won CNET's prized Editors' Choice award, but if none of them fits exactly what you're looking for, the entire list of our favorite projectors can be found on our site.

The following CNET staff contributed to this story: CNET contributor Geoffrey Morrison and Copy Editor Jim Hoffman. For more reviews of personal technology products, please visit www.cnet.com.

Photos by Geoffrey Morrison / CNET / TNS.

Epson Home Cinema 5050UB

Best overall home theater projector

CNET TAKE: The Epson Home Cinema 5050UB is the best all-around home projector we've reviewed and if you want to transform your living room into a home theater, this is the best place to start.

It has an excellent contrast ratio, paired with impressive brightness and accurate color, all with better detail than what's possible with a 1080p native resolution projector. These all make for one of the best projectors I've reviewed in years. It also has extensive lens shift and zoom options so it will fit in a variety of setups including mounted to the ceiling, on a shelf behind a couch and so on.

Even better, the adjustments are motorized, so you can have a 2.35:1 screen and with the press of a button zoom out to fill it or zoom in to just fill the central 16-by-9 portion for TV shows. It still uses lamps, however. If that's a dealbreaker for you check out the Epson LS11000. It's very similar to the 5050 but uses lasers instead of a lamp, which has additional benefits beyond not having to replace lamps.

BenQ X500i

Best short-throw projector

CNET TAKE: The BenQ X500i is one of our favorite projectors. The image it creates is gorgeous. If you have a smaller room, or when placement behind (or above) a couch isn't possible, this projector's short-throw is an excellent option. It needs a space of just 5 to 6 feet from a wall or screen to create a 100-inch image, compared with about 10 feet for a non-short throw projector.

We like it so much we wish it was more flexible, because its image quality is some of the best we've seen in years. It creates a bright, sharp, 4K image with tons of contrast and excellent color. Its image is better than many projectors that cost far more.

Anker Nebula Mars 3 Air

Best portable projector

CNET TAKE: If you're looking for a highly-portable projector that can be battery powered but still create a decent image, the Anker Nebula Mars 3 Air does just about everything right. It's our pick for best portable projector, and it creates a relatively bright image, sounds decent, has Google TV built in and is easy to move around and set up.

It's a little on the expensive side, but if you're looking for something for the occasional movie night at home or on the go, it does a great job. It's an excellent choice for anyone who wants something extremely portable (it even has a handle!) for movie nights outside or anywhere a normal projector would fear to tread.

How to stream Netflix from a second location

By JIM ROSSMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Most of the time I find my column topics from reader interactions or by talking to my friends or colleagues about their issues.

Today we'll talk about an issue I came across, and it could help you.

My wife and I usually spend one weekend per month at my mother-in-law's house, which is about 100 miles from where we live.

Since we stream our TV content, there's no reason we shouldn't use our streaming services when we are away from home. I purchased a Roku streaming stick for my mother-in-law's TV so we can watch Netflix and our other streaming apps.

Things were going fine until one day when my wife called me into the living room because Netflix was not loading and showed her a message that she wanted me to see.

The screen said, "This TV isn't connected to the primary location for this account. Netflix accounts can set one primary location. Create an account to enjoy your own Netflix today.

At the bottom of the screen there were two buttons – "Manage Primary Location" and "I'm Traveling."

We chose "I'm Traveling" and Netflix asked us to verify that we are really the account owner by emailing a verification code to the email on file for the account. I had to enter that code on the screen to verify to Netflix that I am the account owner.

This is part of Netflix's crackdown on password sharing. They're taking notice of where your login is being used and if the login location is not your primary location.

According to Netflix: They use information such as IP addresses, device IDs and account activity to determine whether a device signed into your account is part of your Netflix household.

You have the option to change your primary location, but you can't change your primary location multiple times per month.

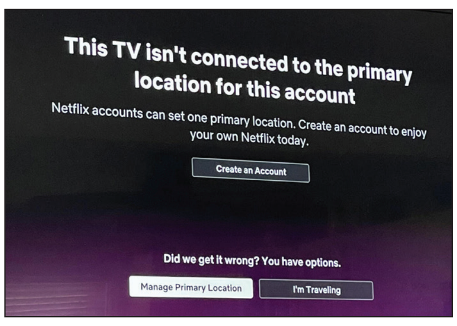
If you have a second home or frequently travel to the same location (like a regular visit to your mother-in-law's house), Netflix asks you to follow these steps:

■ From the main place you watch Netflix, connect to the internet, open the Netflix app from a mobile device or go to Netflix.com from a computer once a month, and stream a TV show or movie for a few seconds to establish a connection.

■ Then take the same steps when you arrive at your second location to continue watching Netflix without interruption.

Since we verified our identity to Netflix and we only stream from the two locations, we've had no issues.

Jim Rossman is a tech columnist for Tribune News Service. He may be reached at jrossmantechadviser@gmail.com.



Jim Rossman / TNS

GADGETS

A versatile lantern for your adventures

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service (TNS)

Duracell's **3000 Lumens Solar Lantern** gets power from solar charging, USB-C charging of the internal rechargeable battery or from four alkaline D batteries (not included).

The versatile and portable (5.35 by 5.0 by 10.1 inches) light is ideal for camping or backyard adventures. Once it's on, there are power beam settings, with choices of high, medium, eco-mode, dimming and a red flasher.

The 4400 mAh Li-ion internal battery powers the lantern and can supply power to external devices. There is a USB-A power outlet port for device charging and a top-side wireless QI charging pad. Both the USB-C power in and the USB-A out ports are behind a rubber tab, which must be closed to ensure its IPX4 water-resistant rating.

Using it is easy; a front power button toggles through the mode settings. The USB ports are located below, and pressing a button folds up the solar panel to expose the QI charging pad. The 2.14-pound lantern has a built-in carrying handle.

https://myproduct.duracelllights.com/products/3000-l-solar-lantern is available at Costco for $39.99

When I first opened the **Soundpeats Pop Clip earbuds** ($39.99), I thought they looked different. After hearing them, I thought "Wow, what a great set of earbuds for a great price."

The open-ear design allows you to hear the sound loud and clear, without any earbuds going into your ear canal. Instead, they rest on the outside; you still hear everything along with your surroundings, making them ideal if you're a street runner or anywhere you want to hear the environment.

Open-ear earbuds won't give you the head-banging sound that other, more powerful (and expensive) earbuds deliver. Instead, you get good sound quality. They connect via Bluetooth V5.4, and they can be connected to a pair of devices simultaneously.

I used the ergonomically designed and sweat-proof (IPX5) Pop Clip earbuds on a few bike rides, nighttime dog walks and quick grocery store trips. They did exactly what they're touted for, letting me listen to music while biking, attending baseball games at night, and hearing cars, shoppers and all the surrounding sounds.

It's also worth noting that Pop Clips do not have over-the-ear earhooks. Instead, they clip onto the side of your ear, which is a big deal to bikers. Their design did not interfere with my helmet or prescription sunglasses.

The Pop Clips weigh 0.16 ounces each and are rated for an 8-hour playtime and up to 30 hours with the included USB-C charging storage case. Inside each earbud is a 10.8mm dual-magnet driver. On-ear controls performed well for pausing music, adjusting volume and accessing voice assistants.

The sound is clear with a nice amount of bass, which is perfect for open-ear sound. The PeatsAudio app can be used to customize the sound, which includes equalizer settings. The app also features earbud tracking, displaying the last known location and triggering a beeping alert to help locate them if they're within 50 meters.

Another open-ear sound option from Soundpeats is the award-winning **PearlClip Pro** ($59.99) clip-on earbuds.

They feature a slightly more powerful sound than the Pop Clips. The PearlClip Pro boasts 12mm dual-magnet drivers, powered by dynamic equalizer algorithms, which enhance bass performance with clear highs and deep bass sound. They have a 0.20 ounce weight, and the ergonomic open-ear clip design ensures all-day comfort for any use, whether you're active, taking a neighborhood walk, or just lying on the sofa.

Each charge provides 6 hours of listening and an additional 18 hours with the storage, USB-C charging case. A 10-minute quick charge will give you about 2 hours of playtime.

https://soundpeats.com

Contact Gregg Ellman at greggellman@mac.com. Follow him on Twitter @greggellman.

ABOVE: Soundpeats PearlClip Pro.

LEFT: The Soundpeats Pop Clip.

Soundpeats / TNS

Duracell's 3000 Lumens Solar Lantern.

Duracell / TNS

Did a lab of AI ‘scientists’ design a possible COVID-19 treatment?

By LUIS MELECIO-ZAMBRANO
The Mercury News (TNS)

> **“You can imagine each researcher having their own team of AI scientist(s) that can be their assistants. It’s quite versatile … I’m super excited that the Virtual Lab could be an accelerator for many types of science.”**
>
> **JAMES ZOU**
> Professor and Computer Scientist at Stanford University, co-led the study

What does a scientist look like?

A bright-eyed intellectual donning a white lab coat and goggles? Often, yes. But these days, they could take on the look of a stack of computer servers softly humming away in an air conditioned building.

That’s what a group of scientists from the San Francisco-based Chan Zuckerberg Biohub and Stanford University aim to do with a “Virtual Lab” of artificial intelligence scientists tasked with doing original research on a potential treatment for COVID-19.

“You can imagine each researcher having their own team of AI scientist(s) that can be their assistants,” said James Zou, a professor and computer scientist at Stanford University who co-led the study. “It’s quite versatile … I’m super excited that the Virtual Lab could be an accelerator for many types of science.”

The AI scientists held meetings, wrote code, and made (virtual) biological models before proposing a slate of molecules to help treat recent COVID variants. After testing the Virtual Lab’s suggestions in the real lab, the scientists found two molecules that might serve as a potential COVID treatment, as they describe in a paper published Tuesday in the journal Nature. While the potential treatment has a long way to go before becoming medicine, the (human) researchers say their model of creating a group of AI scientists could help accelerate discoveries across the scientific world.

Scientific discovery often relies on groups of experts coming together to workshop ideas from different angles to try and solve a problem together. This can produce results that can shift the scientific world – the work that led to the 2024 Nobel Prize in Chemistry involved dozens of scientists in fields from biology to computer science. But access to that depth of connection can be hard to come by, argue Zou and his colleagues.

So Zou wondered if there was a way to imitate those conversations between real world researchers but with AI. While some individual AI systems already are about as good as humans at answering some scientific questions, few people have experimented with putting those AIs in conversation with each other.

To test the idea, the team decided to create a Virtual Lab of AI scientists and give it a thorny, open-ended problem: creating antibody treatments for recent strains of COVID-19. Antibodies can help treat the disease, but are made less effective every time the virus evolves into a new variant, so quickly developing new antibodies could help keep treatments up to date.

The Virtual Lab was run by an AI Principal Investigator, who after getting the assignment, made a team of AI experts to collaborate with on the task. The human researchers armed the AI experts with software that would help them do their jobs such as a software to model proteins for an AI biologist.

Together, the AI lab held group meetings to come up with ideas, and then individual meetings to accomplish individual tasks. The AI team came up with a path to propose treatments – opting to create nanobodies, the antibody’s smaller cousin. The group proposed potential treatments, then wrote code, created computer models to test those treatments and improve on the design of the potential treatment.

“One of the benefits of the virtual lab is that their meetings are much more efficient than our human meetings,” said Zou, noting that the meetings are over in a matter of minutes and several can be run at the same time. “They can actually run a lot of meetings and run these meetings in parallel so they don’t get tired.”

As a testament to this speed, while it took the researchers months to set up the virtual lab, it only took the Virtual Lab two days to propose 92 different candidates of potential COVID-19 treatments. Of these, two seemed particularly promising in attaching themselves to COVID-19 proteins in the lab, meaning they could be potential treatments.

Importantly, while many AI systems provide answers without explaining how they got there, the Virtual Lab had a transcript of all of its conversations. This allowed the human to understand the logic behind the AI scientists’ decisions.

“That was very encouraging to us,” said John Pak, a biochemist and staff scientist at the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub who co-led the study. “As a researcher, you can always be kind of hesitant to incorporate (AI) into your daily routine, but with the virtual lab and the AI agents, it felt pretty natural to interact with.”

Samuel Rodrigues, an AI researcher who was not involved in the study, called the research “a very exciting advance” over email. Rodrigues, CEO of FutureHouse, a San Francisco-based company building AI to automate scientific research, described the approach of multiple AI scientists as “very visionary” and “extremely important” for incorporating AI into science. While he noted that the system would likely have to be tweaked to do other tasks, he argued that was a minor limitation.

“Overall, we are impressed by and are very big fans of this work,” he said.

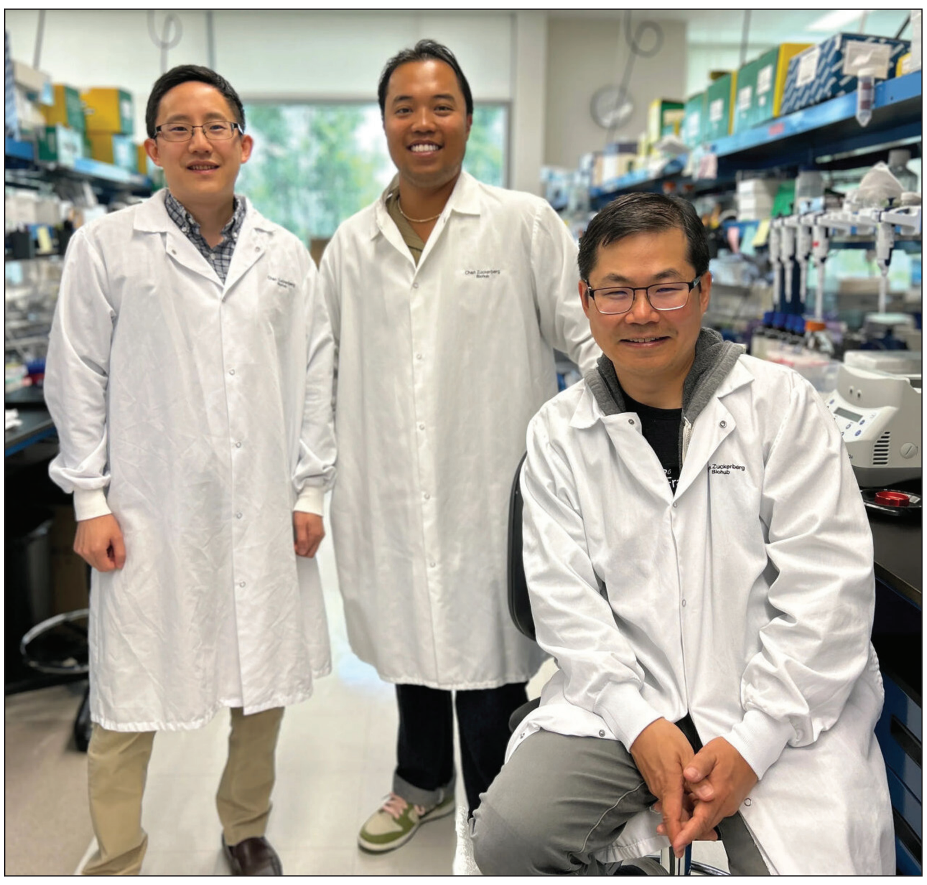
The scientists agree that to create more informed AI experts, future users could arm them with tools and training to make them better, but argue that the system is already quite versatile.

Even so, they admit that the Virtual Lab has its limits. AI systems can sometimes make up facts based on erroneous or incomplete data, such as when an early version of Google’s AI overview suggested putting glue into pizza sauce or eating a rock a day.

To minimize these sorts of gaffes, the team included an AI scientific critic as part of the Virtual Lab to question the assertions of the rest of the group, and often had the lab run several meetings on the same question to see if they arrived at similar conclusions. Ultimately, the Virtual Lab still relied on a human expert who can guide the AI, check its work, and test its assertions in real life.

The researchers also noted that while the nanobodies may be responsive in a petri dish, human bodies are far more complicated, so using these molecules as a treatment would require far more testing before scientists knew whether the nanobodies actually would work in people.

Despite these limitations, both Zou and Pak argue that the Virtual Lab offers a valuable tool for research across fields. “We’re really focused on exploratory research that could – in the hands of others – be useful,” said Pak. “I’m kind of excited about testing this out with different scientific questions … I’m looking forward to trying it out with other projects that we have going on in the lab.”



Julie Chao / CZ Biohub / TNS

CZ Biohub San Francisco scientists Wesley Wu, from left, Nash Bulaong and John Pak contributed to the Virtual Lab paper.

Is ChatGPT making us stupid?

By AARON FRENCH
Kennesaw State University
(The Conversation)

Back in 2008, The Atlantic sparked controversy with a provocative cover story: Is Google Making Us Stupid?

In that 4,000-word essay, later expanded into a book, author Nicholas Carr suggested the answer was yes, arguing that technology such as search engines were worsening Americans’ ability to think deeply and retain knowledge.

At the core of Carr’s concern was the idea that people no longer needed to remember or learn facts when they could instantly look them up online. While there might be some truth to this, search engines still require users to use critical thinking to interpret and contextualize the results.

Fast-forward to today, and an even more profound technological shift is taking place. With the rise of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT, internet users aren’t just outsourcing memory – they may be outsourcing thinking itself.

Generative AI tools don’t just retrieve information; they can create, analyze and summarize it. This represents a fundamental shift: Arguably, generative AI is the first technology that could replace human thinking and creativity.

That raises a critical question: Is ChatGPT making us stupid?

As a professor of information systems who’s been working with AI for more than two decades, I’ve watched this transformation firsthand. And as many people increasingly delegate cognitive tasks to AI, I think it’s worth considering what exactly we’re gaining and what we are at risk of losing.

AI and the Dunning-Kruger effect

Generative AI is changing how people access and process information. For many, it’s replacing the need to sift through sources, compare viewpoints and wrestle with ambiguity. Instead, AI delivers clear, polished answers within seconds. While those results may or may not be accurate, they are undeniably efficient. This has already led to big changes in how we work and think.

But this convenience may come at a cost. When people rely on AI to complete tasks and think for them, they may be weakening their ability to think critically, solve complex problems and engage deeply with information. Although research on this point is limited, passively consuming AI-generated content may discourage intellectual curiosity, reduce attention spans and create a dependency that limits long-term cognitive development.

To better understand this risk, consider the Dunning-Kruger effect. This is the phenomenon in which people who are the least knowledgeable and competent tend to be the most confident in their abilities, because they don’t know what they don’t know. In contrast, more competent people tend to be less confident. This is often because they can recognize the complexities they have yet to master.

This framework can be applied to generative AI use. Some users may rely heavily on tools such as ChatGPT to replace their cognitive effort, while others use it to enhance their capabilities. In the former case, they may mistakenly believe they understand a topic because they can repeat AI-generated content. In this way, AI can artificially inflate one’s perceived intelligence while actually reducing cognitive effort.

This creates a divide in how people use AI. Some remain stuck on the “peak of Mount Stupid,” using AI as a substitute for creativity and thinking. Others use it to enhance their existing cognitive capabilities.

In other words, what matters isn’t whether a person uses generative AI, but how. If used uncritically, ChatGPT can lead to intellectual complacency. Users may accept its output without questioning assumptions, seeking alternative viewpoints or conducting deeper analysis. But when used as an aid, it can become a powerful tool for stimulating curiosity, generating ideas, clarifying complex topics and provoking intellectual dialogue.

The difference between ChatGPT making us stupid or enhancing our capabilities rests in how we use it. Generative AI should be used to augment human intelligence, not replace it. That means using ChatGPT to support inquiry, not to shortcut it. It means treating AI responses as the beginning of thought, not the end.

AI, thinking and the future of work

The mass adoption of generative AI, led by the explosive rise of ChatGPT – it reached 100 million users within two months of its release – has, in my view, left internet users at a crossroads. One path leads to intellectual decline: a world where we let AI do the thinking for us. The other offers an opportunity: to expand our brainpower by working in tandem with AI, leveraging its power to enhance our own.

It’s often said that AI won’t take your job, but someone using AI will. But it seems clear to me that people who use AI to replace their own cognitive abilities will be stuck at the peak of Mount Stupid. These AI users will be the easiest to replace.

It’s those who take the augmented approach to AI use who will reach the path of enlightenment, working together with AI to produce results that neither is capable of producing alone. This is where the future of work will eventually go.

This essay started with the question of whether ChatGPT will make us stupid, but I’d like to end with a different question: How will we use ChatGPT to make us smarter? The answers to both questions depend not on the tool but on users.

The Conversation is an independent and nonprofit source of news, analysis and commentary from academic experts. This article is republished under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article at https://theconversation.com.

THE CONVERSATION

'AI veganism'

Some people's issues with AI parallel vegans' concerns about diet

By DAVID JOYNER
Georgia Institute of Technology
(The Conversation)

New technologies usually follow the technology adoption life cycle. Innovators and early adopters rush to embrace new technologies, while laggards and skeptics jump in much later.

At first glance, it looks like artificial intelligence is following the same pattern, but a new crop of studies suggests that AI might follow a different course – one with significant implications for business, education and society.

This general phenomenon has often been described as "AI hesitancy" or "AI reluctance." The typical adoption curve assumes a person who is hesitant or reluctant to embrace a technology will eventually do so anyway. This pattern has repeated over and over – why would AI be any different?

Emerging research on the reasons behind AI hesitancy, however, suggests there are different dynamics at play that might alter the traditional adoption cycle. For example, a recent study found that while some causes of this hesitation closely mirror those regarding previous technologies, others are unique to AI.

In many ways, as someone who closely watches the spread of AI, there may be a better analogy: veganism.

AI veganism

The idea of an AI vegan is someone who abstains from using AI, the same way a vegan is someone who abstains from eating products derived from animals. Generally, the reasons people choose veganism do not fade automatically over time. They might be reasons that can be addressed, but they're not just about getting more comfortable eating animals and animal products. That's why the analogy in the case of AI is appealing.

Unlike many other technologies, it's important not to assume that skeptics and laggards will eventually become adopters. Many of those refusing to embrace AI actually fit the traditional archetype of an early adopter. The study on AI hesitation focused on college students who are often among the first demographics to adopt new technologies.

There is some historical precedent for this analogy. Under the hood, AI is just a set of algorithms. Algorithmic aversion is a well-known phenomenon where humans are biased against algorithmic decision-making – even if it is shown to be more effective. For example, people prefer dating advice from humans over advice from algorithms, even when the algorithms perform better.

But the analogy to veganism applies in other ways, providing insights into what to expect in the future. In fact, studies show that three of the main reasons people choose veganism each have a parallel in AI avoidance.

Ethical concerns

One motivation for veganism is concern over the ethical sourcing of animal by-products. Similarly, studies have found that when users are aware that many content creators did not knowingly opt into letting their work be used to train AI, they are more likely to avoid using AI.

These concerns were at the center of the Writers Guild of America and Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists strikes in 2023, where the two unions argued for legal protections against companies using creatives' works to train AI without consent or compensation. While some creators may be protected by such trade agreements, lots of models are instead trained on the work of amateur, independent or freelance creators without these systematic protections.

Environmental concerns

A second motivation for veganism is concern over the environmental impacts of intensive animal agriculture, from deforestation to methane production. Research has shown that the computing resources needed to support AI are growing exponentially, dramatically increasing demand for electricity and water, and that efficiency improvements are unlikely to lower the overall power usage due to a rebound effect, which is when efficiency gains spur new technologies that consume more energy.

One preliminary study found that increasing users' awareness of the power demands of AI can affect how they use these systems. Another survey found that concern about water usage to cool AI systems was a factor in students' refusal to use the technology at Cambridge University.

Personal wellness

A third motivation for veganism is concern for possible negative health effects of eating animals and animal products. A potential parallel concern could be at work in AI veganism.

A Microsoft Research study found that people who were more confident in using generative AI showed diminished critical thinking. The 2025 Cambridge University survey found some students avoiding AI out of concern that using it could make them lazy.

It is not hard to imagine that the possible negative mental health effects of using AI could drive some AI abstinence in the same way the possible negative physical health effects of an omnivorous diet may drive some to veganism.

How society reacts

Veganism has led to a dedicated industry catering to that diet. Some restaurants feature vegan entrees. Some manufacturers specialize in vegan foods. Could it be the case that some companies will try to use the absence of AI as a selling point for their products and services?

If so, it would be similar to how companies such as DuckDuckGo and the Mozilla Foundation provide alternative search engines and web browsers with enhanced privacy as their main feature.

There are few vegans compared to nonvegans in the U.S. Estimates range as high as 4 percent of the population. But the persistence of veganism has enabled a niche market to serve them. Time will tell if AI veganism takes hold.

David Joyner is an associate dean and senior research associate at the College of Computing at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

THE CONVERSATION

Paxton Media Group

E-edition EXTRA

HOME&GARDEN

Kitchen and bathroom hacks

By **CATHY HOBBS**
Tribune News Service (TNS)

For many homeowners, kitchens and baths are the key focal points of the home, especially when it comes to upgrades and renovations.

From small changes such as adding new hardware to existing cabinetry, to modern lighting and accents, there are some affordable design hacks that can help anyone achieve a designer look for less.

Kitchens

DESIGN RECIPE TIP:

■ Showcase cleanliness and functionality.

■ Use decorative jars, cutting boards and plants minimally.

■ Staging accessories should reinforce organization.

STAGING TIPS:

■ Remove the countertop clutter.

■ Add a bowl of fruit or greenery for freshness.

COMMON MISTAKES:

■ Overuse of accessories or overly stylized staging.

■ Personalized or themed décor.

Bathrooms

DESIGN RECIPE TIP:

■ Create a spa-like atmosphere.

■ Use fresh white towels, candles and greenery.

■ Keep surfaces ultra-clean and minimal.

STAGING TIPS:

■ Layer textures – ceramic, wood, linen.

■ Update light fixtures for a modern touch.

COMMON MISTAKES:

■ Outdated hardware and lighting.

■ Over-the-top theming or personal items.

Cathy Hobbs is a nationally recognized real estate stager and celebrity interior designer based in New York City. Cathy is the owner of the NYC + Hudson Valley-based interior design, home staging firm Cathy Hobbs Design Recipes and the author of the book "Home Design Recipes." www.cathyhobbs.com.

Scott Morris / TNS

TOP: Accents and accessories can be used to help convey functionality and a "lifestyle." **ABOVE:** White cabinetry is accented by stainless steel appliances and bright accents.

How can I check my deck for safety?

There's nothing quite like enjoying a warm evening on the deck with friends, food and fresh air. But even the most inviting outdoor oasis can become risky without the right upkeep.

Angie Hicks
Ask Angi

Whether you're firing up the grill, entertaining guests or just kicking back with a good book, your deck needs to be as safe as it is beautiful. The wear and tear of summer use can put a strain on your deck, so follow this deck safety checklist to ensure everything is safe:

Watch for rotting wood

Decks are exposed to the elements year-round, and moisture is their biggest enemy. Rain, snow and even humidity can creep into boards, leading to rot, especially in older decks. If you can sink a screwdriver more than an eighth of an inch into the surface, you've probably got rot. Also watch for peeling or bubbling paint, which may signal trapped moisture.

If you find any trouble spots, replace the boards immediately or call a local deck pro for a more thorough inspection. To prevent rot in the future, apply a good quality stain and sealant every few years.

Check and replace fasteners

Loose or corroded screws and nails are more than a nuisance; they're a safety hazard. Rotten wood often can't hold fasteners securely, which could cause parts of your deck to shift or collapse. Periodically walk your deck and check for raised nails or screws that don't feel tight.

Replace rusted fasteners and reinforce weak spots. For added safety, consider upgrading to galvanized or stainless steel hardware, especially if you live in a humid or coastal region.

Fix cracks and creaks early

A creaky board might seem harmless, but it could be an early sign of structural damage. As wood ages, it dries and cracks, which compromises its strength. Listen for popping or groaning sounds as you walk across the deck. Examine visible boards for signs of splitting, and don't forget to check underneath.

Small cracks can often be filled with wood filler or epoxy. If you're unsure about a noise or can't locate the issue, a handyperson or carpenter can help diagnose the problem before it worsens.

Secure wobbly railings

Deck railings see a lot of action, especially near stairs. Over time, they can loosen from repeated use or exposure to the elements. If you can lean into it with your full weight and feel it give way, it's time for repairs.

Tighten any loose fasteners, and replace railings that show signs of rot or splitting. Regular maintenance now can help you avoid a costly full railing replacement later.

Inspect for insect damage

Termites and carpenter ants love wood, and your deck might be a feast waiting to happen. Check for soft spots near the home's siding or along the base of posts. Also watch for sawdust-like residue or tiny holes in the wood. These are classic signs of bug activity.

If your deck looks like it's pulling away from the house, that could indicate damage to the ledger board. Call in a pro if you suspect insect damage or structural shifting.

Clean mold and mildew

Not all green stuff on your deck is just harmless moss. Mold, mildew and fungi can creep in quietly and slowly eat away at your boards. Regularly clean your deck with a gentle soap-and-water mixture, especially after wet seasons.

Schedule a good scrub at least twice a year, once in the spring and again in the fall. Keeping your deck clean won't just help it look better; it'll help it last longer too.

Add lighting for safety

A deck without lighting is an accident waiting to happen, especially around stairs and edges. Solar or plug-in string lights can add charm while also helping you and your guests move safely after dark.

For more permanent lighting solutions, such as recessed stair lights or hardwired fixtures, call in a licensed electrician. They'll make sure your setup meets code and doesn't pose a fire hazard.

Keep the grill area safe

Grilling on the deck is a summer favorite, but it comes with fire risks. Keep your grill at least two feet away from railings, siding and overhangs. Trim nearby branches, and store flammable items such as a lighter fluid well away from the flame zone. Always have a fire extinguisher within reach when you're cooking.

Tweet your home care questions with #AskingAngi and we'll try to answer them in a future column.

TRAVEL

Sailing in Newport Harbor, Rhode Island.
Dreamstime / TNS

Best sailing destinations in the U.S.

By NOREEN KOMPANIK
TravelPulse (TNS)

It is widely believed that Mark Twain said "Twenty years from now, you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than those you did. So, throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the wind in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

There's just something special about sailing. The open water, sunshine on your face, the wind in your hair and a total sense of freedom, relaxation and centering, a perfect antidote to the stresses of living in today's modern world.

Whether you decide to be part of a crew manning the sails or just along for the ride, we are so fortunate to have so many incredible destinations here in the U.S. to sail, whether it be a tranquil lake or riding the ocean waves.

Newport, R.I.

Often referred to as the "sailing capital of the world," Newport offers a deep maritime history, ideal sailing conditions and an important role in international competitive sailing. The coastal town hosted the America's Cup from 1930 to 1983 and continues to attract sailors from around the globe to its annual sailing events.

Newport has been a longtime training hub for Olympic and professional sailors, and there's nothing like moving under the impressive Newport Bridge, the longest suspension span in New England.

Chesapeake Bay, Annapolis, Md.

Sailing in Annapolis is a major part of the city's identity, other than being the location of the United States Naval Academy, where future naval officers are trained in the art. Located where the Severn River meets the Chesapeake Bay, the area offers easy access to both open water and protected coves, making it a sailor's haven.

The bay's deep navigable waters make it ideal for recreational and competitive sailing, and the destination hosts numerous sailing and regatta events and boat shows throughout the year.

Charleston, S.C.

Dreamstime/TNS

Charleston Harbor, in Charleston, South Carolina.

This southern belle consistently ranks as one of the top places in the U.S. for sailing, offering incredibly picturesque views. With its historic charm, great sailing conditions and a vibrant maritime culture, it's only natural that sailors want to be out on the water.

Charleston has some top-notch marinas and yacht clubs, sailing schools and charters, and the College of Charleston sailing team is nationally ranked. My favorite time to sail is at day's end with an impressive combination of historic skyline, calm harbor waters and glowing sunsets over the Charleston Peninsula, creating an unforgettable experience.

Florida Keys, Fla.

The Florida Keys are home to the only barrier coral reef in North America and the third largest in the world, and sailing here is a tropical dream. The Keys' multihued waters, warm trade winds and laid-back island culture make for a paradise without having to venture further into the Caribbean with a passport.

Stretching over 129 miles from Key Largo to Key West, the island chain with more than 800 keys offers countless places to sail, anchor, dock and explore. Constant trade winds, shallow warm waters (especially on the Gulf side) and easy access to snorkeling, diving and fishing right off the boat make the Florida Keys a popular sailing destination.

Santa Barbara, Calif.

Known for its mild weather, rich maritime history, picturesque coastline and vibrant sailing community, Santa Barbara is a haven for sailors of all levels. Affectionately known as "The American Riviera," this jewel of the California coast's mild winds, calm seas and near-constant sunshine makes for picture-perfect sailing conditions.

Those into competitive sailing can join in the adventure on Wet Wednesday races at the Santa Barbara Yacht Club, a beloved tradition in the sailing community. The region also hosts several regattas and sailing festivals throughout the year.

Finger Lakes, N.Y.

This region consists of 11 glacial lakes and one Great Lake (Ontario), making it a superb destination for the sailing fan. Visitors can choose from a number of sailing companies or use private charters such as Sail True Love out of Watkins Glen and Sail Seneca from Geneva.

The lakes are long and narrow, creating consistent and moderate wind channels that funnel down the length of the lake, making for reliable sailing conditions. Many of the Finger Lakes are deep and clear, good for keelboats, helping to avoid hazards like submerged rocks or sudden shoals. And it's hard to beat the views, with waters surrounded by hills, vineyards and charming small towns.

San Diego, Calif.

America's finest city, as it's often called, is home to almost year-round picture-perfect weather, reliable winds and a stunningly picturesque and protected sheltered bay with easy access to the open Pacific.

San Diego has a long naval and maritime history, which means sailors will not only get great views of the city, Embarcadero and Coronado Island from the water, but also a myriad of U.S. Navy ships. It's also a great chance to view gray whales, blue whales, dolphins and a slew of various seabirds.

With its vibrant racing and cruising community and notable yacht clubs, this Southern California gem is a true sailor's city.

San Juan Islands, Wash.

Located in the Pacific Northwest, the San Juan Islands, with more than 170 islands and reefs, are a hidden gem for sailors seeking peaceful tranquility while surrounded by stunning landscapes and quiet coves. Yet they are still considered one of the top sailing destinations in the region.

Situated in the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains, the islands offer calmer seas, less wind and rain than the outer coast, ensuring smoother, safer sailing. Sailors regularly spot seals, sea lions, porpoises, bald eagles and orcas, especially around San Juan Island.

San Francisco, Calif.

An individual sail might be a challenge here unless you're a skilled sailor or racer, due to the bay's strong winds and currents. However, there are plenty of opportunities to get out on the water by a guided catamaran.

Seeing the City by the Bay skyline via water is a rewarding experience, as is sailing beneath one of the world's most recognizable bridges and past the haunting site of the abandoned Alcatraz Island. You'll encounter calm waters turning gusty, choppy and tide-driven, but it's all part of the fun. The city hosts world-class regattas including the America's Cup and SailGP events.

U.S. Virgin Islands

Sailing the cerulean waters of the U.S. Virgin Islands provides an exhilarating, authentic Caribbean experience without needing a passport. It's best to hire a boat captain for the day or take a catamaran sail, as you would need a passport to enter British Virgin Island waters.

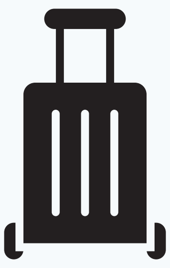
The three islands making up the U.S. Virgin Island chain are only a few miles apart, making for easy navigation and line-of-sight sailing. Warm water temperatures and steady trade winds make for nearly perfect sail conditions, and the crystalline waters with their colorful, stunning coral reefs and tropical fish make for amazing snorkeling or diving conditions.

TRAVEL TIPS

Are Global Entry and TSA PreCheck losing their value?

Big changes have been rolling out at security and customs checkpoints at airports across the United States.

Earlier in July, the TSA ended its shoes-off policy for travelers in the regular security line, making the screening process in that lane faster and less of a hassle. Meanwhile, Customs and Border Protection has launched a new program called Enhanced Passenger Processing, which allows travelers a faster screening option using facial recognition at nine U.S. airports and two international airports, even if they're not Global Entry members.



But with TSA's and CBP's normal lanes getting faster and easier, does that mean that programs like TSA PreCheck and Global Entry are losing their value? We asked air travel experts for their thoughts on whether travelers should still shell out for the known traveler memberships.

One thing to keep in mind is that even though keeping shoes on will help regular TSA lines go faster, the screening process is still more complicated. PreCheck is still "different than the regular line considering you don't have to remove large electronics, and you go through a metal detector, which doesn't require emptying your pockets the same way as in the regular line," says Brett Snyder, president of air travel assistance firm Cranky Concierge.

Indeed, PreCheck lines are still faster than the regular lane even after the shoe policy change, with PreCheck wait times averaging less than 10 minutes, according to TSA.

Snyder also points to another PreCheck perk that's not as obvious: access to Touchless ID, the program that allows travelers to use a facial scan to access the security screening area instead of showing an ID and boarding pass. Touchless ID is an ultra-fast option, but is only offered to fliers with PreCheck flying on airlines and through airports that participate in the program. (American Airlines, Delta, United, and Alaska Airlines all participate in the program at 14 major U.S. airports.)

Plus, TSA has a long way to go before its expedited memberships become obsolete. "We've dispensed with the shoe carnival, but the war on water continues," says Gary Leff, an airline expert and author of the aviation blog View From the Wing. "That might change – it would be a huge win! – but it's difficult to predict. Although PreCheck members are subject to the same 3-1-1 liquid restrictions as travelers in the regular line, they at least don't need to remove their liquids, which shaves off a precious few moments. "In the past TSA has said they won't lift liquid restrictions until the 2040s, when they finish rolling out new scanning technology. That should be an embarrassment to the agency, that it will take them another 15 years. But the DHS Secretary says it could come soon. Who knows?"

Some say that even when the dreaded liquid rule is eventually overturned, and other hassles like removing large electronics go by the wayside, PreCheck lines will still be worth it. "Usually, the TSA Pre-check lines are shorter," says Michael Boyd, president and CEO of aviation analytics firm Boyd Group International. "Yes, plan on the liquid restrictions going away for everyone. Plan on the nonsense of taking out laptops to go away. But still the lines at Pre-Check in terms of numbers of people will be less."

Although PreCheck memberships seem like they will hold their value for years to come, it's not clear if the same will be true for Global Entry. "At this point, I think most people will still find value in TSA Precheck, but fewer and fewer will see Global Entry as important," Snyder says. Thanks to programs like the CBP's Enhanced Passenger Processing, which is making regular customs checks faster. The program photographs "travelers using auto capture technology to provide a complete customs assessment (biometric confirmation, eligibility, enforcement) before they reach the CBP officer," according to a CBP news release.

The experts believe that security and customs processes will only continue to become more streamlined, with more and more new technology making checkpoints faster. One recent example is the just-launched One Stop Security program, which allows travelers on certain connecting international flights to bypass a second security screening. Both American Airlines and Delta Air Lines have joined the initiative for some of their flights to and from London. "We're already seeing tests of checked bags not having to be collected and dropped back off for connecting passengers arriving off of international flights, and tests of not having to pick up bags or even re-clear security," Leff says. "I don't expect rapid expansion of these projects, but both help bring us more in line with better processes from abroad."

For the time being, each flier needs to assess their travel habits to know whether PreCheck and Global Entry memberships are still worth it. "Whether or not you want to go through the trouble of PreCheck depends on how frequently you travel," Leff says. "If you're a several-times-a-year-international traveler, Global Entry (or even better, Nexus) is a no brainer. A once-a-year traveler might find it a break-even proposition, unless the cost is rebated through a premium credit card."

By Jessica Puckett / TravelPulse (TNS)